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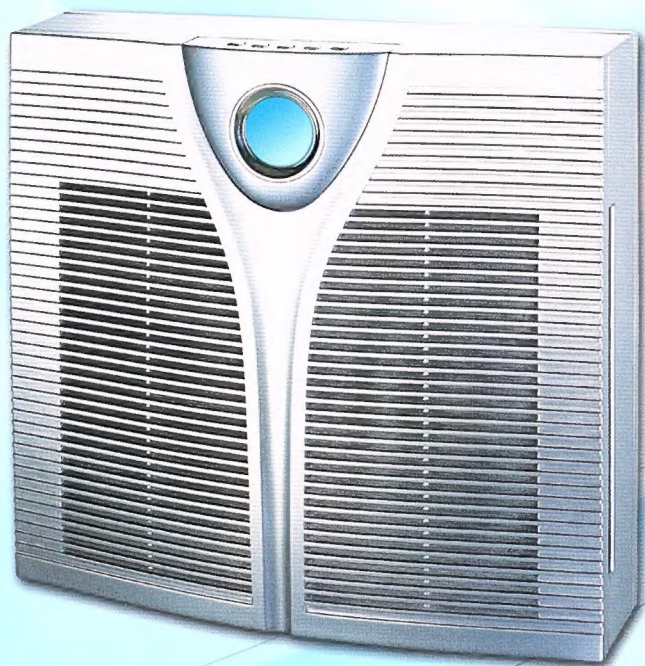
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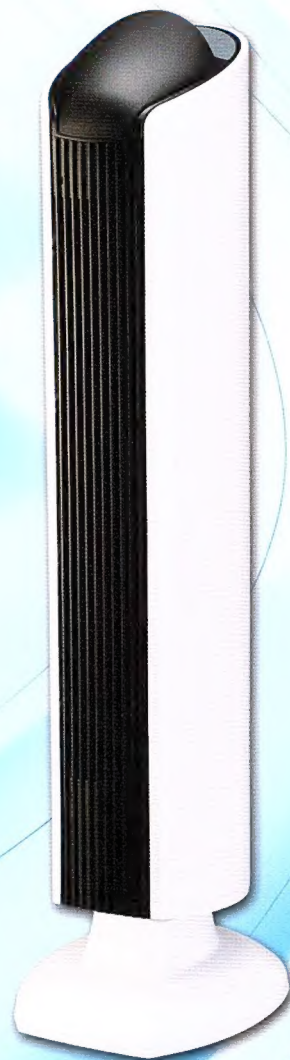
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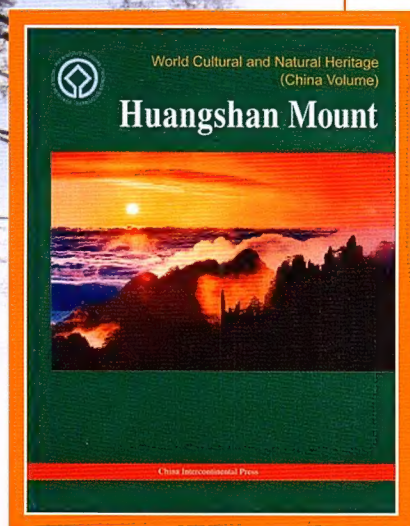
Mt. Huangshan,

situated in the south of Anhui Province, is one of the most famous scenic areas in China. Being put into the World Heritage List, it is also granted with two laurels of cultural heritage and natural heritage by the UNESCO's World Heritage Commission.

The landscape of the mountain is a typical granite hoodoo landform shaped during the long geological periods by several tectonic movements in the crust. Mt. Huangshan has long been famous for its strange-looking pine trees, grotesque rocks, sea of clouds and hot springs.

All over one thousand metres above sea level, there are 77 peaks in the scenic area of almost two hundred square kilometres. Granite rock forests and rock columns together with massive rocks scatter everywhere. Moreover, Mt. Huangshan is a diverse ecosystem with a treasure of wildlife. There are approximately 1450 species of plants, 300 species of vertebrates and 170 species of birds.

Combined unique scenery and magnificent sea of clouds, the beauty of Mt. Huangshan has continued to fascinate endless visitors. Catch a glimpse of its glory in this "Huangshan Mount" pictorial that is filled with breath-taking images taken by our team of photographers!



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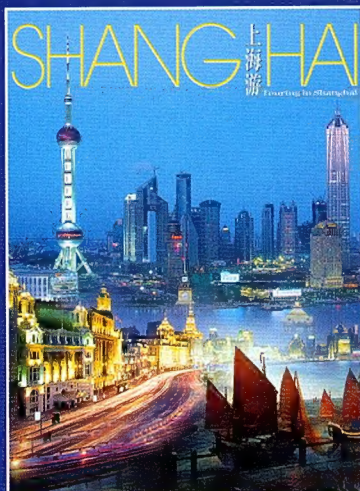
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Shanghai

has evolved at an unprecedented speed for decades into the biggest commercial city in China and one of the great metropolises of the world. Favourably located at the mouth of the Yangtse River, Shanghai has a long history and a rich culture. Commercial tower blocks and traditional buildings exude their individual charms simultaneously in the Pudong District, where hundreds of buildings in different styles, old or new, are collectively known as the Exposition of World Architecture. A kaleidoscope of entertainments and festivals of Old Shanghai attracts scores of entrepreneurs and travellers alike. "Touring in Shanghai" takes you deeper into this vibrant city

through spectacular photography, along with outlines for more than 10 different kinds of tours including a shopping tour, popular tourist sights, cultural excursions, and more. Practical information summarises accommodations, transport and dining options, and tourist maps are also included. "Touring in Shanghai" is the latest, most comprehensive travel pictorial of Shanghai available in Hong Kong.



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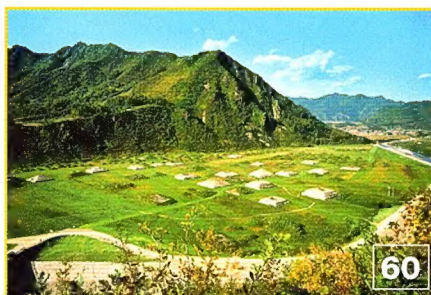
14 Feature

The Amazing Southern Guizhou: Unique Karst Landforms and Peculiar Folk Customs

Photos by Chan Yat Nin, Xie Guanghui & Huang Yanhong

Article by Chan Yat Nin, Gao Tian & Huang Yanhong

In the south of Guizhou Province are two autonomous prefectures with almost identical names: Southern Guizhou Bouyei-Miao Autonomous Prefecture and Southwestern Guizhou Bouyei-Miao Autonomous Prefecture. And the similarities do not end there.

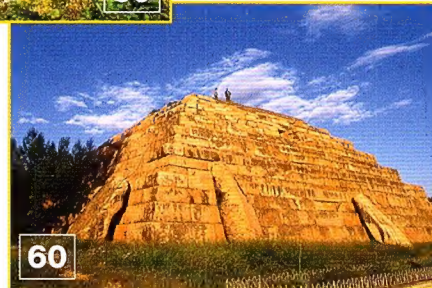


52 Discoveries

Russian Performing Artists — "Gold Rush" in China

Photos & Article by Chen Tuanjie

China's expanding and thriving economy has brought on a "Gold Rush Fever" in some neighbouring countries. Since 2000, performance troupes from Russia have been arriving in China to make their living in the performing arts.



60 Discoveries

Enigmatic Traces of the Ancient Koguryo Kingdom

Photos by Su Nan Article by Chan Yat Nin

In July 2004, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee inscribed the historical sites and relics of the ancient Koguryo Kingdom on the World Heritage List.

China

CHINA TOURISM

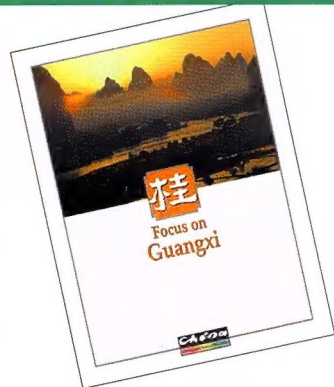
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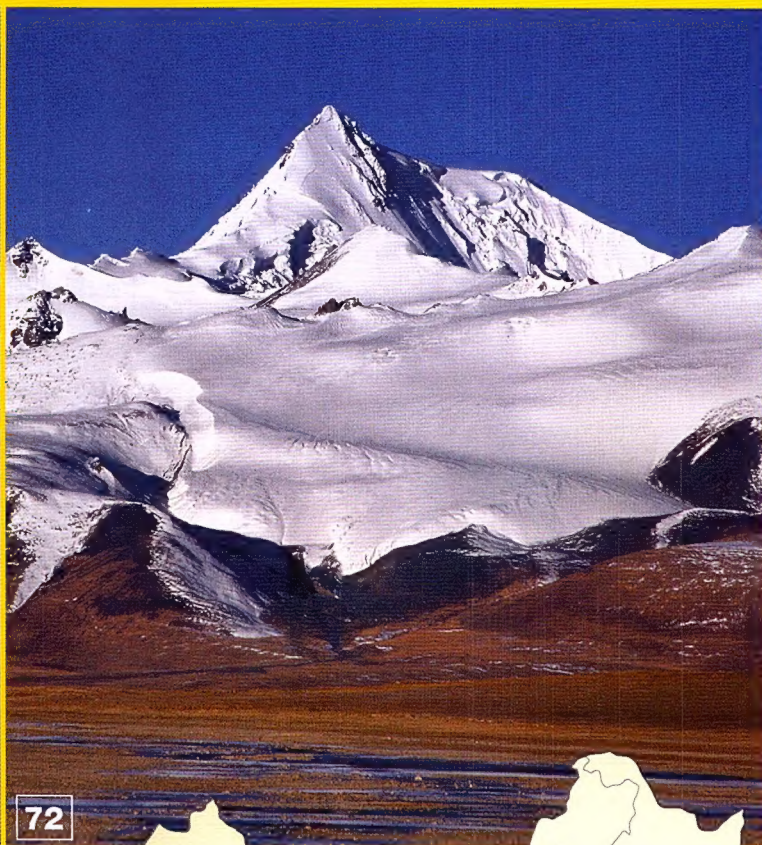
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68 Culinary Delights

The Ultimate Food Guide to Chengdu

Photos by Zhang Guoqiang Article by Wu Deyan & Mai Tianrang

The map of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, is like a carefully designed and laid-out guide to local delicacies.

72 Landscapes

The Expressive Snow-Capped Mountains

Photos & Article by Shui Xiaojie

In the past I always thought that only crazy people would want to climb snow-capped mountains. But when I actually came close to one of these towering summits, I was impressed by its holiness and dignity, and began to understand the lure felt by mountaineers.

78 On the Way

The Recuperating Jiangzha Hot Springs

Photos by Zhu Bin Article by Liu Qiankun

Hidden in the midst of the borders of Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai provinces, Jiangzha hot springs have been worshipped as a holy site by the Tibetans there for centuries.

80 Photography

Capturing the Essence of Pines

Photos & Article by Huang Songhui

Chinese pines are an important element of Chinese landscape painting. With careful observation, a deep understanding of nature, patience, and the right weather conditions, a photographer can achieve the same effect with his pine pictures.

84 Feature Destination

87 Next Issue



A Miao girl of Guizhou Province
(by Chan Yat Nin)



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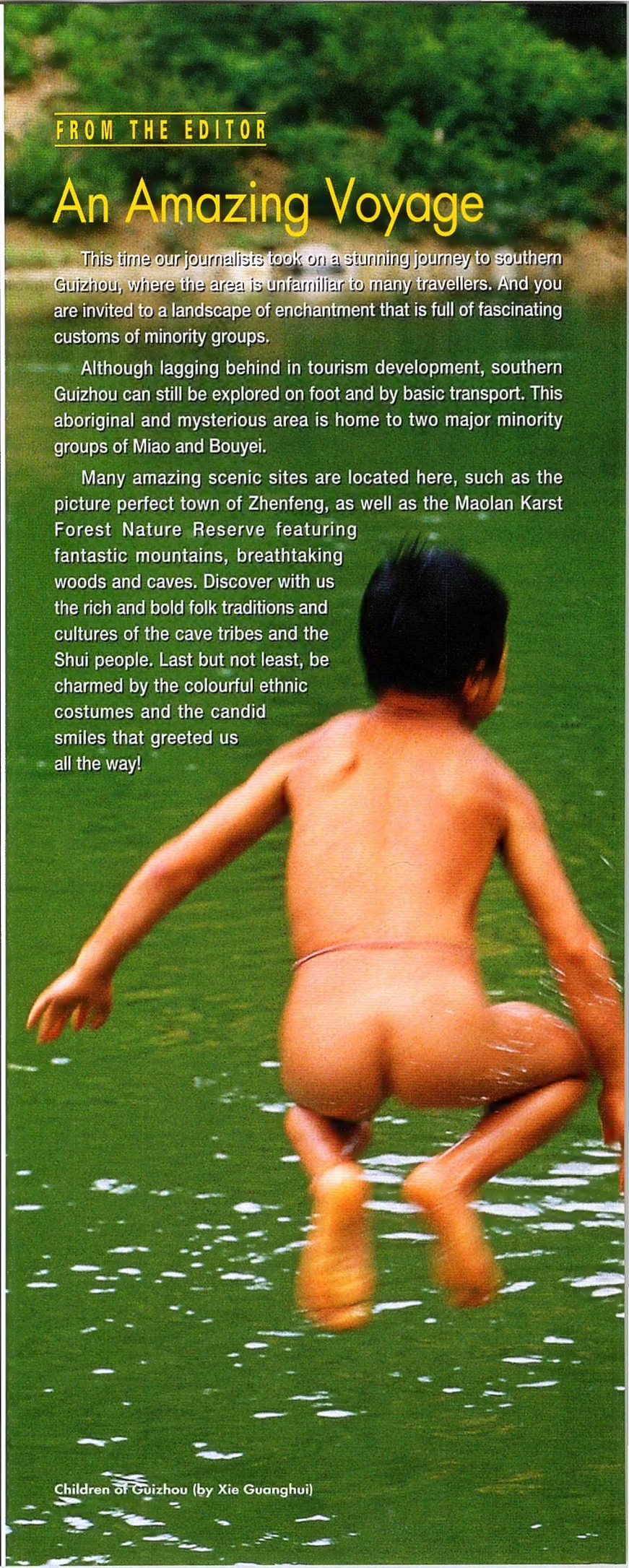
FROM THE EDITOR

An Amazing Voyage

This time our journalists took on a stunning journey to southern Guizhou, where the area is unfamiliar to many travellers. And you are invited to a landscape of enchantment that is full of fascinating customs of minority groups.

Although lagging behind in tourism development, southern Guizhou can still be explored on foot and by basic transport. This aboriginal and mysterious area is home to two major minority groups of Miao and Bouyei.

Many amazing scenic sites are located here, such as the picture perfect town of Zhenfeng, as well as the Maolan Karst Forest Nature Reserve featuring fantastic mountains, breathtaking woods and caves. Discover with us the rich and bold folk traditions and cultures of the cave tribes and the Shui people. Last but not least, be charmed by the colourful ethnic costumes and the candid smiles that greeted us all the way!



Children of Guizhou (by Xie Guanghui)





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DEC / JAN

Dec 24 - Mar 28

Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong

Huang Yongyu, the famous Chinese painter, has gained international reputation as a pioneer in reforming traditional Chinese painting. He is obsessed with the subject of his hometown in the county of Fenghuang in Hunan Province and his sentiments are easily identified in his works. This exhibition, **Celebrating 80: The Art of Huang Yongyu**, which have been on tour from Beijing to Changsha to Guangzhou, will showcase Huang's recent work to celebrate his 80th birthday.



Longhua Temple

Dec 31 - Jan 1

Longhua Temple, Shanghai

The Ancient Longhua Temple is the oldest and largest Buddhist temple in Shanghai, and the bell at Longhua Temple has once ranked first among the eight scenic spots of Shanghai. On New Year Eve, 108 auspicious tourists will join the **Tolling Bell Ceremony** with the abbot of the temple and usher in the auspicious New Year. Buddhism maintains that everyone will have 108 worries in his life and the echo of the bells will drive all worries away, bringing best wishes to the people. Apart from Longhua Temple, Jingci Temple in Hangzhou will also hold this tolling bell ceremony.



Mid Jan

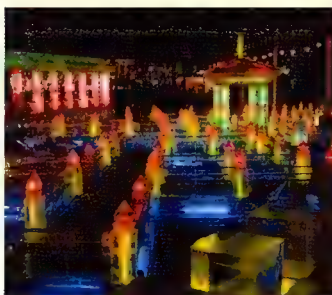
Jilin City, Jilin Province

The rime of Jilin is praised as one of the four natural wonders in China. It is formed by the steam that evaporates from the never-frozen Songhua River. During **Jilin Rime Festival**, a grand ice and colourful lantern show will be held on the river. Other events include an international ice sculpture competition, tree-root carvings exhibition, fireworks displays, etc.

Jan 5 - Feb 5

Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province

Harbin City is known as a paradise of ice and snow and is famous for its dazzling outdoor winter artwork. A highlight of the **Harbin Ice and Snow Festival** is the Harbin Ice and Snow World that has a massive display of gorgeous ice miniature of famous buildings and sceneries. At night, these sculptures are illuminated by multi-coloured lights. Skating, sledding and other winter sports are popular during the festival and some of the most popular ice sculptures are the giant ice slides.



Dec 25 - Jan 3

Beinan Township, Taitung County, Taiwan

The Puyuma tribe in Taiwan holds a series of festivities at the end of the year and **Puyuma Monkey Festival** is the most important one. The main purpose of this festival was to train young tribesmen to hunt and fight by spearing monkeys. Though real monkeys have already been replaced by grass monkey dolls, the event still gives youngsters and tourists an opportunity to learn about the tribal culture of Taiwan.



Jan 15 - Feb 29

Longqing Gorge, Yanqing County, Beijing

The Longqing Gorge Ice and Snow Festival will provide you with a magical winter wonderland. Tourists may try their hands at ice-fishing or one of the numerous ice or snow sports, and finish off the day marvelling at the intricately carved ice sculptures and ice lanterns on display, while fireworks turn the icy gorge into a colourful light show.

now till Dec 5

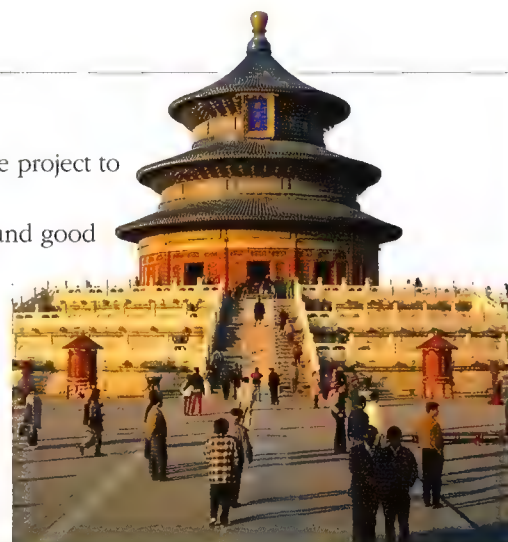
Sai Van Lake Square, Macao

The **4th Macao Food Festival** is a food exposition as well as a fun carnival that you can't miss. It promises to be an exchange platform for cuisines from Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Thailand, Philippines, etc. Be prepared that hundred of food stalls that are divided into different theme like "Macao Street", "South East Asia Street" and "Portugal Street" will be packed with joyful people. To add more fun, a large variety of cultural performance and entertainment will be staged in front of the Macao Tower.

Temple of the Heaven under Maintenance

The Temple of the Heaven in Beijing is undergoing a huge maintenance project to restore its original appearance.

The Temple of Heaven was the place where emperors prayed for rain and good harvest. A total of 22 emperors carried out 654 such ceremonies here before the temple was transformed into a park in 1918. The project, costing 20 million yuan (US \$2.4 million), will include the replacement of 40,000 m² bricks inside the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest, as well as the amendment of 6,500 m² coloured oil paintings and tiles inside the hall. The project is scheduled to finish before September 1 of 2006 and authority promised the symbolic hall of the temple would remain open to tourists during repairs.



China's Largest Urban Wetland Park Opened

China's largest urban wetland landscape park based in Harbin, capital city of the northeastern province of Heilongjiang, is now opened to visitors free of charge.

The establishment of new wetland parks in urban areas such as Harbin is hailed as a move showing China's increasing awareness of wetland preservation. As for this 38-ha Harbin Aquatic Park, it enjoys a water surface of 14 ha which is divided into three lake areas. Inside the lake area sit three islands where rare species like red-crowned cranes lived.



Joint Development of Shangri-la

Sichuan, Yunnan and Tibet have vowed to go beyond the restrictions caused by administrative demarcation and work together in turning Shangri-la into a world-class brand name of tourist destination.

Shangri-la became world-renowned after British writer James Hilton published his book "Lost Horizon" in 1933. To boost up the economies, Sichuan, Yunnan and Tibet had all played the Shangri-la card, claiming that the real Shangri-la was in its own region. In 2001, Tibet Autonomous Region put forward a proposal that the three regions should optimise all Shangri-la tourism resources and promote them as one single zone. This zone covers 50 counties including the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Diqing in Yunnan, Qamdo Prefecture and Nyingchi County in Tibet, as well as Ganzi Prefecture in Sichuan. Hopefully, all conflicts concerning Shangri-la could then rest in peace.

Ancient Prison Turns Tourism Spot

Tibet's largest ancient prison Langzisha is under repair and will be opened to the public in May 2005. Costing 500,000 yuan (US \$60,241), this project aims to restore the original look of the ancient prison and to help people learn about Tibet's history.

The reconstruction team will repair the walls, roof, court room, prison control room and nine prison cells altogether. Situated in Bargar Street of Lhasa, Langzisha is a typical example of Tibetan architecture covering an area of 720 m². It was built by the Fifth Dalai Lama in the middle of the 17th century, and was originally meant to be the government headquarters of Lhasa. Later it was turned into a prison but was vandalised during the Cultural Revolution.



Wudaiianchi Lakes Wins Universal Recognition

Wudaiianchi Lakes in Northeast China's Heilongjiang Province was granted "World Biosphere Reserve" status by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recently.

Wudaiianchi Lakes have a unique geological structure and topography, which are products of frequent volcanic movements in the past thousand years. Located 30 km from the Sino-Russian boundary, it attracts numerous Russian tourists as the mineral water here could cure rheumatism.



Local Government Protects Old Folk Music

The 600-year-old popular folk music of Northwest China, Hua'er, has officially been brought under State protection.

Hua'er (meaning flower) is sung in the fields and mountains by different ethnic groups, usually from man to woman. However, It was found that some old Hua'er tunes no longer existed in writing. Not even the oldest person in a village could say how some of the tunes were traditionally sung. The Chinese Folk Artists Association therefore nominated the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, in the central part of Gansu Province, as the "hometown of Hua'er", to safeguard this age-old folk music from being culturally homogenised. Records of the music sung by elderly Hua'er singers were kept, and young professionals who can sing the old songs in their original form and local dialects will be fostered.

Part of Rampart Collapses in Pingyao



A section of circumvallation in the ancient city of Pingyao, in north China's Shanxi Province was abruptly collapsed on October 17. The collapsed rampart was about 17 m in width and has huge cracks. Local cultural relic protection departments have immediately taken measures to prevent further collapsing.

It is said that lack of proper repair work is the reason behind the collapse.

Pingyao has been listed as a World Heritage Site since 1997. The city is the only one in China completely preserved in its original

state, with no modern buildings, only narrow stone-plate lined with many Chinese-style shops.

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Wal-Mart Opens 40th Outlet in China

Hubei Wal-mart, the world's largest retailer, announced the opening of its 40th outlet in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei Province. This U.S.-based retail chain has opened 39 outlets in major cities like Shenzhen, Beijing, Harbin and Nanjing. With the coming of Wal-mart, all the world's top three retailers have entered the Hubei's market, including the French retailer giant Carrefour and the world largest chain-store Metro.



Shenzhen Metro on Trial

Guangdong The construction of 16 Shenzhen Metro stations was completed recently and on trials in November. Phase I of the Shenzhen Metro has 20 stations and its construction was started in March 2001. Apart from the station Huanggang, the other 19 would be opened by the end of 2004.

Daily Flights from Shenzhen to Osaka

Guangdong A daily Shenzhen-Shanghai-Osaka flight was launched recently. This is Shenzhen's first flight to Osaka. It departs from Shenzhen at 2:20 pm and arrives at Osaka at 8:15 pm local time. The return flight leaves Osaka at 9 am local time and reaches Shenzhen at 1:25 pm. The flight takes five hours and 45 minutes, with a 50-minute stopover in Shanghai.

A Better Excuse to Go Shopping

Hong Kong The Kowloon-Canton Railway that joins Mainland China and Hong Kong has extended to the famous tourists area of East Tsim Sha Tsui since October.

Although the extension is only 1 km long, it costs 4.1 billion HK dollars (US \$525 million) and is considered an important project as it links up this area to the mass transportation system of Hong Kong.

East Tsim Sha Tsui is well known to visitors as it is packed with luxurious hotels and shopping arcades. The opening of the extension is expected to provide travellers with an even more convenient transport service, and hence more shopping time.



Beijing to Build More Star-Grade Hotels

Beijing The capital city Beijing plans to increase the number of star-grade hotels to meet the needs of the 2008 Olympic Games, mainly through upgrading existing economy-class hotels.

Beijing has 601 star-level hotels now but she is aiming for 800 before the Olympic Games.

The city also plans to build a second subway loop line, in a bid to improve the city's metro network. Currently there's only one loop line in the centre of the city. The second line is expected to pass through the Zhongguancun high-tech zone, the central business district in the east, and the Olympic park in the north of the city.



Big Buddha is Watching You

Jiangxi A 416-m-long sleeping buddha statue in Yiyang, Jiangxi Province in eastern China, is opened to public in October. It claimed to be the world's largest sleeping Buddha, and it has taken nearly one year to finish. The 68-m-high statue, carved from the hills in Yiyang, has a 50.5-m-long head. It is even bigger than the long-lost Sleeping Buddha of Bamian, Afghanistan, which was reported a stretch of 305 m by a Chinese pilgrim in 629 AD.

More Convenient on Streets of Guangzhou

Guangdong Toilet is always essential for a pleasant trip. To cater for the needs of tourists, Guangzhou government would build 13 more public toilets on and near Beijing Road. As women were more likely to go shopping, women's rooms would be enlarged. Another piece of good news: all toilets in Guangzhou's department stores, hotels and restaurants will be open to tourists free of charge.

There are now 1,408 fixed toilets and 114 portable toilets in the city. In the recent long holidays, 800,000 people on average visited Beijing Road each day.



Express Link Offers New Shuttle Service

Macao A new shuttle bus service, Express Link, offering fast and direct transfer between the Macao International Airport and the Macao Ferry Terminal, is now launched.

When travelling by Express Link, passengers heading for Hong Kong and Shenzhen from the airport do not need to go through immigration and customs clearance, and they can depart directly for the Ferry Terminal. The same transfer service is offered for passengers arriving from Hong Kong or Shenzhen by ferry to the airport.

Renovation of Peking Man Ruins Completed

Beijing Large scale renovation of the Peking Man site at Zhoukoudian on Beijing's southwestern outskirts was finished. The three-month renovation makes it possible for the ruins to sustain earthquake measuring eight on the Richter scale. A survey, launched in August last year, showed seven of the eight fossil zones at Zhoukoudian were facing erosion. Mining and road construction around the ruins also posed threats to its protection.

The renovation aimed at reinforcing the roof of the museum, where it housed the ruins and five other spots.



New Air Route Linking Guangzhou and Tokyo

Guangzhou US Northwest Airlines (NWA) opened a new route linking Guangzhou with Tokyo.

The airline will provide six round-trip flights each week, which are scheduled to take off from Baiyun International Airport at 7:50 am and return to Guangzhou at 10:35 pm on the same day. Asian passengers only have to transfer in Tokyo and will then reach eight port cities of the United States including Detroit, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York, Portland, San Francisco and Seattle.

Qinghai-Tibet Railway's Progress

Tibet The Qinghai-Tibet Railway has paved its way into Nagqu County, an important centre in northern part of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

With an average altitude of 4,500 m, Nagqu area boasts 34 million ha of grassland and over 7.7 million heads of livestock. The Railway will wind through Nagqu area for 510 km, connecting 11 townships and 11 freight or passenger stations.

The Qinghai-Tibet Railway entered Tibet at Amdo County last June and the whole 1,142 km-long railway is scheduled to be completed in 2007.



More Flights on Shanghai-Copenhagen Air Route

Shanghai Scandinavian Airlines announced that it would increase flights running from Shanghai to Copenhagen in Denmark. Currently, flights shuttle between the two cities on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Under the new schedule, flights are available every day except Thursday.

The occupancy rate of the flights has gone up by 30 to 40 percent since September 1 when northern Europe was opened as a tourism destination to Chinese citizens.



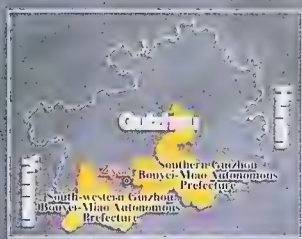
Lufthansa Promotes New Business Class

China Germany's Lufthansa Airlines has launched its brand-new business class service in China. The service will be available to passengers on flights from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong to Munich in Germany. The new seats can be extended into a 2-m-long bed. Lufthansa has invested some 300 million Euros in the makeover, but has not raised the ticket prices.



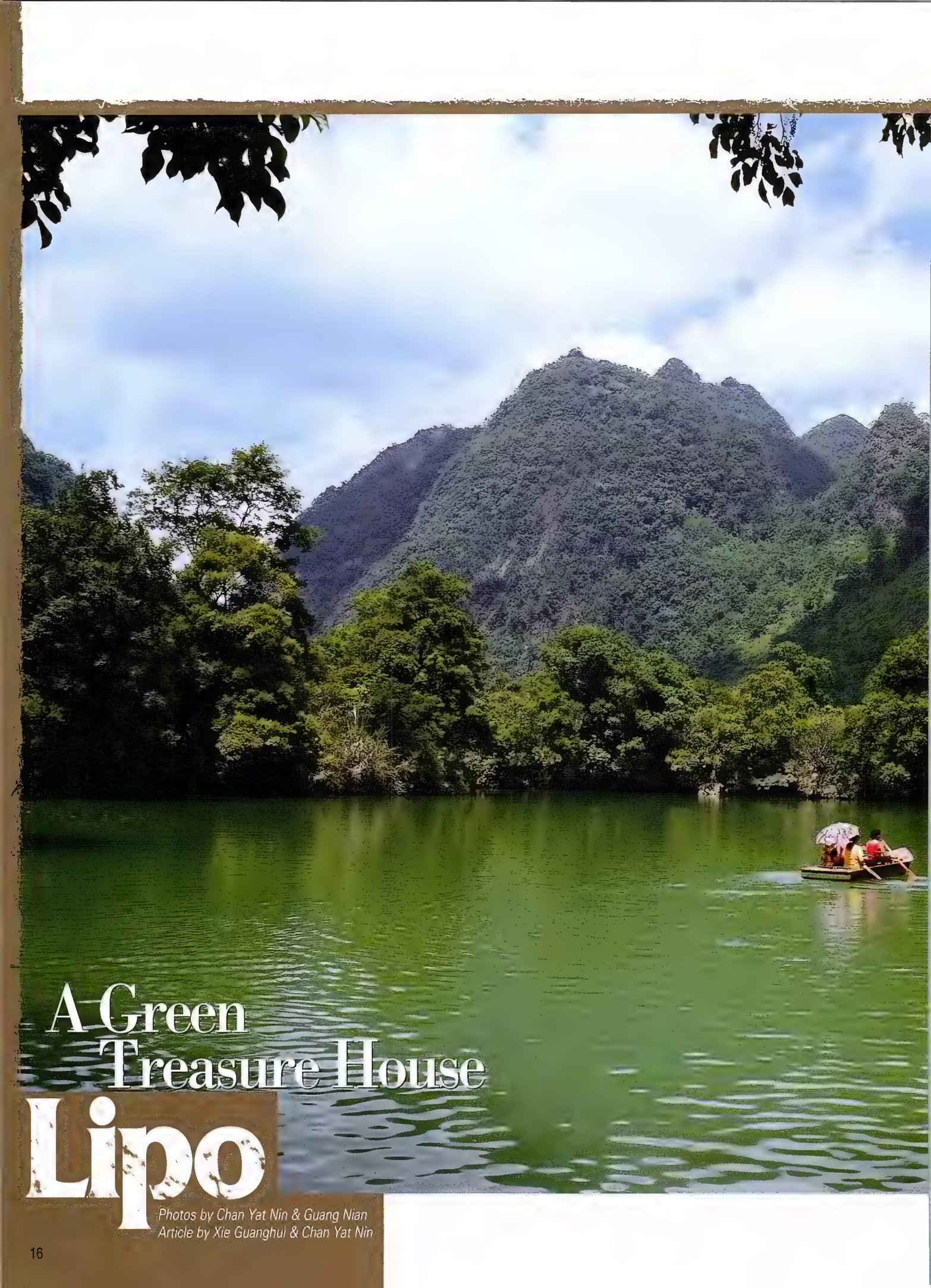
The Amazing Southern Guizhou

Unique Karst Landforms and Peculiar Folk Customs



In the south of Guizhou Province are two autonomous prefectures with almost identical names: Southern Guizhou Bouyei-Miao Autonomous Prefecture and Southwestern Guizhou Bouyei-Miao Autonomous Prefecture. And the similarities do not end there. Firstly, both of them belong to the widespread zone of karst landforms with numerous stone forests, peaks and caverns. Secondly, they are populated with two fascinating ethnic minorities of Bouyei and Miao. Thirdly, they both lag behind in tourism development.

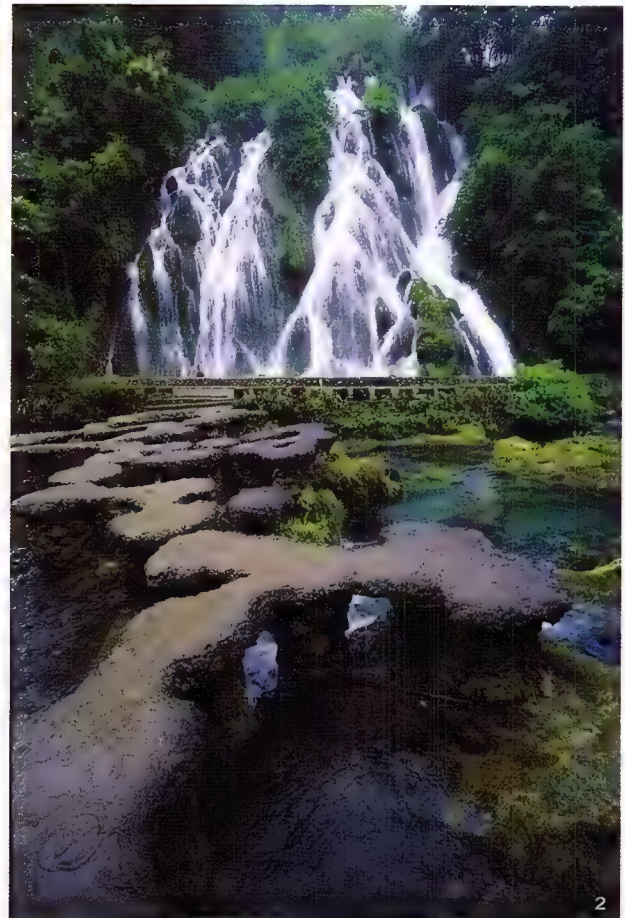
Located in a remote region, these places are seldom visited by travellers. However, as transportation has improved in recent years, perhaps it would bring in more adventurous sightseers.



A Green Treasure House

Lipo

Photos by Chan Yat Nin & Guang Nian
Article by Xie Guanghui & Chan Yat Nin



Lipo is a county seat located at the southern tip of Guizhou. Bordering Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, it is at the junction of the world's largest karst geomorphologic zone, covering Guizhou, Guangxi and Yunnan.

I looked forward to visiting the place because I know it is a region with subtropical karst primitive forests. Karst scenery here differs greatly from anywhere else. The Shuichun River, Daqikong and Xiaoqikong scenic areas, the Maolan nature preserve of karst forests along with other tourist sites in Lipo, are widely known under the title of Zhangjiang State Scenic Site.

Forests Entwined with Lava and Waterfalls

Early in the morning, our bus left for Lipo from Guiyang, the provincial capital. The ride was only about four-and-a-half hours, whereas it would have taken over 12 hours several years ago. In the outskirts of the county seat, the environment is very beautiful. The limpid Shuichun River flows south from the north,

1. Yuanyang Lake embraced by forests is a karst lake. (by Wang Dongyou)
2. Laya Waterfall pours down. The Xiangshui River in front of it boasts a winding suspension stone path. (by He Shujuan)



threading through the city. Starting from the lower reaches of the river, Shuichun River turns into the Zhangjiang River that passes through Chaoyang and Wangmeng towns. Then it meets with Xiangshui River at Daqikong and Xiaoqikong before running into Guangxi. From there, it continues to penetrate Liuzhou and winds out of the province from Wuzhou. Then it becomes the Xijiang River, a tremendous torrent rushing across Guangdong Province, and finally empties itself into the South China Sea.

After a ride of 33 km in a southerly direction along the lower reaches of the Zhangjiang River, I came to the intersection of the Zhangjiang and Xiangshui rivers. Then I moved west upstream along the Xiangshui River and soon

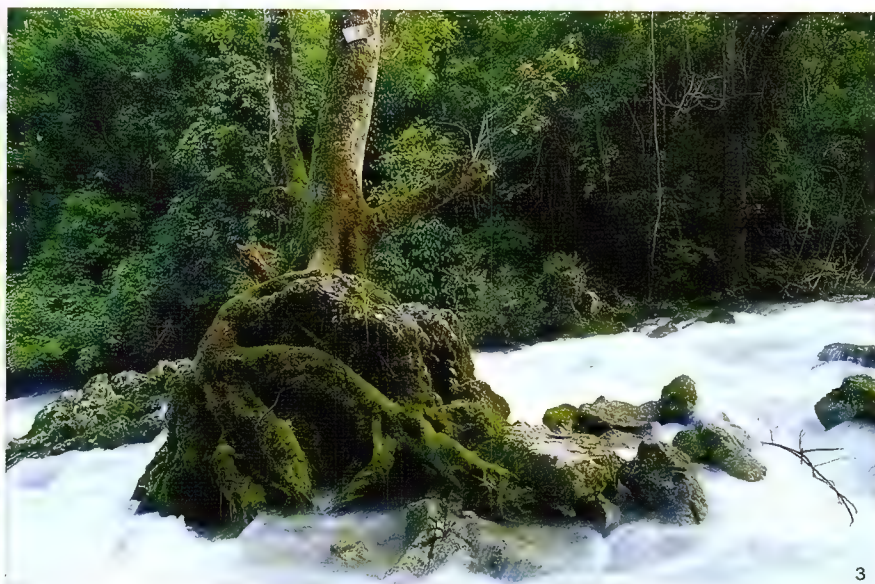


entered into the Xiaoqikong (Small Seven-Arched Bridge) scenic site. It is a narrow gorge sandwiched between mountains with emerald thick forests. An ancient seven-arched stone bridge spans the tranquil river, producing a symmetrical reflection of the bridge. Built in 1838, the small bridge is well preserved. It was part of an ancient post road leading down to Guangxi. Stepping on the stone bridge, I scanned the mountains on both sides of the river. Their reflection in the unpolluted water glimmered with dim green light. Like a Chinese landscape painting, the sight was fantastic.

I walked 30 to 40 m upstream along the path skirting the river. There the surrounding mountains pierce into the sky, one higher than another. In my mind, I had entered a dreamily serene valley. All of a sudden, the peaceful river water changed its face. Formed by a group of cascades, the water poured down in white waves before my eyes. With more than 20 stages of cascades, it is over 100 m in height and about 20 m wide. The drop of each stage is around one metre. The sound of water became louder and louder at some distance ahead. A gust of cool wind mixed with vapour assailed me. I turned

my head to see a huge waterfall. The rumbling sounds thunderous; the momentum was staggering. It was none other than the famous Laya Waterfall. It rushed down in torrents from a precipice to the roadside with water splashing in all directions.

The deeper I went into the gorge, the darker the greenery I found. On either side of the Xiangshui River, meandering peaks blanketed with emerald karst primeval forests tower into the clouds. Originating from Yugoslavia, the term "karst" means lava. The "karst forest" refers to trees growing on karst landforms. It is said that on the belt of the globe at 25 degrees north latitude, which is the majority of the regions from Arab Peninsula to Sahara



3

like a beryl inlaid into the belt of the globe, glistening with dazzling lustre.

I went into a karst funnel forest named the Yezhulin (Wild Boar Wood). From the bottom of the funnel to the horizon are overlapping thick forests with queerly shaped trees. There is very little soil on the rocks. Giant trees stand erect relying on their thick and twisting roots that strike deep into the crevices of the rocks. No longer able to withstand the pressure of the roots, some of the rocks would eventually break apart.

Getting through the green corridor of the forest, I came to a brook. Over 500 m long and three to five metre wide, it flows gently forward.

Desert and up to Mexico City, have experienced desertification or semi-desertification. This has become a common phenomenon in most of the zones with karst landforms. Normally, forests are scarcely to be found. The only exception is the Maolan karst region in Lipo. On this vast region of over 20,000 ha, green trees and plants grow luxuriously. There are no other karst forests at the same latitude of the world. If viewed from a spacecraft, it looks

The Maolan karst region looks like a beryl inlaid into the belt of the globe.

Unexpectedly, this place is also overgrown with vegetation. Year in year out, the trees, washed by torrents, strike roots into

the water and grow with luxuriant foliage.

1. Fengshen Cavern is fathomless and mysterious. (by Chan Yat Nin)
2. It is inconceivable that trees grow on rocks in karst forests. (by Chan Yat Nin)
3. Trees in karst forests stand with their roots firmly grabbing the rocks. (by Gao Tian)
4. The Tiansheng Bridge is washed out by river water. (by Chen Fu)



4



After dropping from stage after stage of cascades, the stream threads through Xiaoqikong and flows into the Zhangjiang River.

Yuanyang Lake Surrounded by Forests

Karst tidal springs and rising springs are two wonderful sights in the forest. The springs have formed many lakes, among them, the 3,000-m²-Yuanyang (Mandarin Duck) Lake being the most enchanting.

I approached Yuanyang Lake along the path in the forest. Thick foliage tightly cloaks the lake. Taking the steps down I came closer to the azure lake water that gave me an illusion of entering a big cave. The fact is that after absorbing and reflecting the shadows of the surrounding green trees, the blue colour of the water becomes even darker. By the lake is a pier for pleasure boats.

Composed of two small lakes, Yuanyang Lake lies on both sides of the tortuous 2.7-km-long Wolong (Crouching Dragon) River. Branches of the river link the small lakes together. The river course is complicated with many twists and turns, similar to the river villages in southern China.

Cruising through the lake, I arrived at the power station of Xiaoqikong. Later I saw that Yuanyang Lake is actually the upper reach of the Xiangshui River. The lake water from the power station goes through an underground river into a landscape of stream intertwining with forest. After dropping from stage after stage of cascades, the stream threads through Xiaoqikong and flows into the Zhangjiang River.

Peculiar Caverns at Daqikong

Five kilometres to the north of Xiaoqikong, the Daqikong (Great Seven-Arched Bridge) scenic site has an area of 42 km². A river named Dagou winds all over the area and forms sheer cliffs on either side of it. Unique rocks and caverns appear everywhere. At a long narrow gorge, the scenery is quite different from that of Xiaoqikong. There are

fewer cascades in this site but the mysterious gorge, the huge caverns and the deep undercurrent are astonishing. Among them, the most famous are the Shanshen (Mountain God) Gorge, Fengshen (Wind God) Cavern and Tiansheng (Natural) Bridge.

The Tiansheng Bridge, in fact a large arch washed out by river water, is over 60 m in height and more than 10 m in thickness with an arch about 20 m in width. You can pass through the arch along a plank road. Looking up, I saw peculiar lava hanging down from the ceiling of the arch. Looking down, I saw the river water dropping down and through stages of cascades.

Drifting Down Shuichun River

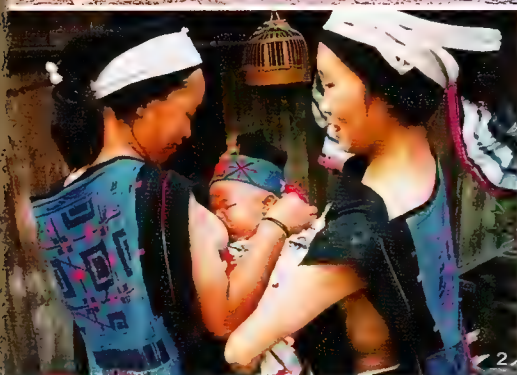
Drifting down Shuichun River is one of Lipo's highlights. Taking a special bus from the county seat, we drove north for 30 minutes and got to the pier.

In an orange lifejacket, I went aboard the boat. A young

1. The Shuichun River, the upper reaches of the Zhangjiang River, is a scenic spot for drifting. (by Xie Guanghui)
2. The Zhangjiang River near the Xiaoqikong is spanned by an iron chain bridge, the symbol of Yao villages. (by Gao Tian)
3. The Xiaoqikong scenic site gets its name from this seven-arched bridge built in Qing Dynasty. (by Chan Yat Nin)







boatman, an oar in hand, was at the helm. The boat drifted quietly downstream with the scenes on both sides of the river slowly moving back ward . Greeting us ahead

were sheer cliffs and luxuriant forests. Once again, I fully imbibed the beauty of the karst landforms in Lipo.

After drifting for over 10 minutes, the river water suddenly turned into turbulent waves that dashed against the bow of the boat. Surging up and down on the terrifying waves, the small boat could only race forward like a runaway wild horse. Intriguing sites flashed swiftly by: Yingbin (Guest Welcoming) Gorge, Shidan (Guts Testing) Rock, Bailong (White Dragon) Wave, Jushi (Huge Rock) Wave, Hutiao Wave, Jiemei (Sisters) Pool, Shuangshi (Double Lion) Wave, Baojian (Precious Sabre) Shoal, Xiaoyao (Leisure) Wave, Long Wave, and many others. We finally arrived at Yidaolang. There the valley becomes wider and the water surface is as smooth as a mirror. It was sunset by the time the trip was over. I changed to a shuttle boat back to Lipo, the county seat.

The Way Yao Girls Capture Their Lovers

In the region of Maolan and the Daqikong and Xiaoqikong scenic sites, live several compact communities, namely the Black-Trousers Yao, White-Trousers Yao, and the two branches of the Yao minority. Travellers to this place usually come to visit Yao villages to experience the unique custom of this minority people.

The next morning I took a ride along the Zhangjiang River to visit the Dongmeng Yao Village 39 km away. With mountains all around, the village is composed of 52 households of White-Trousers Yao. In the centre of the village is a 250 m² field. Wooden houses on stilts back onto the mountains. Small paths neatly paved with pebbles link every household together. It is rare to find any animal dung on the paths because there are drainage ditches by the stone path. On rainy days, animal dung is washed into the ditch that leads to the paddy fields.

The Yao high-stilt houses serve for storing sundry articles or raising stock animals on the ground floor, while the upper floor with rooms and a fire pit is the dwelling place. The most interesting feature is the way Yao people build barns near the houses. In mountain areas, villagers have thought up many ways to keep rats from stealing grain, but the traditional ways are not always the best. Mousetraps can only catch a limited number, while rat

poison is also harmful to other innocent creatures. The intelligent Yao villagers build each barn separately on a spacious area with four props. Then they put four smooth glazed pots between the props and the barn floor. It is indeed an effective trick since rats cannot climb pass this junction.

The distinctive feature of the White-Trousers Yao males is of course, their white trousers. Young men wear a black jacket with blue lace trimmings tied with a floral belt. The legs of their white short loose trousers are decorated with patterns of stripes, patches and designs that are embroidered with red, white and blue thread. When a man becomes a father, he wears his long

hair bound with a long piece of black and white cloth. Yao ladies wear an embroidered waistcoat with patterns and a blue batik skirt trimmed with floral lace. Exquisitely embroidered, the waistcoat has a simple style. It has two pieces of cloth that casually cover the front and the back. The ladies here never wear bras and their arms are bare up to the armpits. In artistry, their costumes are by no means inferior to the up-to-the-minute styles seen on the catwalk in Paris. Once married, the women wear long hair and a black pointed kerchief.

"Belt-snatching" is the special courting custom of White-Trousers Yao. At every country fair or celebration, Yao girls get all spruced up to look for their Prince Charming. Once a girl found a boy who takes her fancy, she would wait for him at a secluded place by the road. When he approaches, she would bravely grasp his hand and snatch his belt away. If the young man does not like the girl, he would stalk off. The girl then has to ask someone to return the belt to him. Provided the two hit it off perfectly, the boy will follow at the girl's heels and strike up a conversation with her. Then the girl makes a floral belt and gives it to the boy on the next fair or festive occasion. After exchanging tokens of love to each other, they tell the good news to their parents and look forward to the wedding day.

Black-Trousers Yao Sounding Marriage through a Hole

When I visited Yao villages at Yaolu Township, I observed the Black-Trousers Yao courting rituals in Lipo. When the villagers build a new house, they always



Yao people think up an innovative way to keep rats from stealing grains.



of the night to play soft music with a bamboo flute or single-stringed fiddle to express his love. In case the girl is fast asleep, the boy would poke her with a twig through the hole to wake her up. If the girl intends to accept the courting, she would open the door and let him in. Then they could talk with each other by the fire pit until daybreak. After a period of courtship, the boy would offer a colourful silk to the girl. In return, the girl would give him a hand-made embroidered belt and complete the engagement.

1. White-Trousers Yao children are very fond of spinning tops. (by Zeng Xianyang)
2. The waistcoats of White-Trousers Yao women are very simple. (by Wen Yingbin)
3. Bright and colourful pleated skirts dry on the shore of a river in a Yao village. (by Chan Yat Nin)
4. Sounding marriage through a hole is one of the arcane customs of the Black-Trousers Yao. A youngster courts the girl in the room through the Marriage Sounding Hole on the plank wall. (by Chan Yat Nin)
5. Yao people build their barns on an expanse of land and fix smooth glazed pots to them to keep rats from stealing grain. (by He Shujuan)





Land of the Shui People Sandu

Photos & Article by Xie Guanghui

With the Duliu River and the upper reaches of the Longjiang River running alongside, Sandu is China's only Shui Autonomous County. Likening their place to the "feathers of a phoenix", the Shui people not only have their own language, but also their own calendar.

It was morning when I left the county town of Sandu for Bangao Village of Sandong Town 30 km away. This is an old village of Shui people, with sparsely-planted paddy fields glistening in the sun. A dirt path led to a concrete square as big as a tennis court. This was the Shui people's bronze drum square, the venue for their festival

performance. I was greeted rather pompously by the village chief, Mr. Wei, and five elders. Wearing a headdress and long navy cotton jacket, the 70-year-old chief was wiry and light, and a marked contrast to the Miao village I had visited earlier. Here, lively young Miao girls in festive costume guarded the village entrance and insisted that



generation to the next, there is little known about the origin of the Shui people. According to their folklore, the earliest Shui ancestors consisted of three brothers who first lived in the southern areas along the coast, today's Guangdong and Guangxi. Natural disasters forced them to escape north to the Hongshui River, where the Beipanjiang and Nanpanjiang rivers run from Guizhou and meet in Lingyun County in Guangxi. Hongshui means "red river" in Chinese, as it is quite muddy. But after it runs downstream and joins Linjiang to form Qianjiang, the water runs clear again. The brothers then split up. The eldest went up the Hongshui River, the youngest went down along the clear Qianjiang River, while the middle brother crossed the Hongshui to Guizhou's Sandu.

The People of Water

Some scholars believe the early Shui ancestors were probably a branch of native people of Guangxi because of three factors: Shui people have always been connected with water, fish appears in many of their customs, and their spoken language sounds similar to Cantonese.

After uniting China in 221 B.C., Emperor Qinshihuang sent an army of 500,000 to southern China. In order to resist the ruling of Qin, some of the Guangxi natives migrated north. The ancestors of the Shui people went up the Longjiang River, settled along the border between

everyone who entered the village sample their wine.

The chief and the elders took me to a building that housed an altar table for ancestral worship in its spacious hall. Since the Shui people relied on inconsistent oral communication to pass down its history from one

1. The serene paddy field of Sandu

2. The houses of Shui people are built by the mountains. (by Guo Jianshe)

3. The exquisite Shui embroidery



Guizhou and Guangxi, and became an individual nationality. Some Shui people, however, believed their ancestors were driven by war to migrate from Jiangxi along with a south-advancing army. This belief is now widely thought to be incorrect. Perhaps such misconception came about because many educated Shui people professed to have come from Jiangxi when taking public examinations. Since China's past feudal society harboured serious racial discrimination against minority nationalities, these people probably lied to avoid prejudice, hence the mistaken belief today.

Farming fish in paddy fields is very common in Sandu.

Ancestral Worship Food

Right next to the ancestral hall was a fire pit and earth stove, which acted as kitchen cum winter fireplace. The Shui people lead a simple life. At meal times, the whole family sits around the three-legged stove and cooks a hot pot of vegetables, having a bowl of salt and peppery vegetable soup as dip.

The chief had sent someone to catch a few fish from their pond. They were going to prepare a dish of fish with vegetables for ancestral worship. According to him, their ancestor was famished after crossing the river and caught a fish from the river as food. Fish thus became the only meat

offered to their ancestors. Shui people never worship their ancestors nor celebrate their festivals with animal meat. They only use fish, bean curd and vegetables. It is also believed that when the early ancestors left their homeland, family members saw them off with a farewell dish of fish with nine kinds of vegetables.

Farming fish in paddy fields is very common in Sandu. When the fields are filled up with water and the planting begins in spring, fry are put in at the same time. When autumn comes the fields will be drained before the rice is harvested. The fish usually weight from two to three kilograms. The advantage of farming fish in the paddy field is that it can replace insecticide and fertiliser, growing healthier crop.

Language and Crafts

The Shui language is difficult to understand and more so to learn. The official Chinese language has 21 consonants, but the Shui language has over 70 consonants and 55 vowels. The Shui characters are ancient-looking, a bit like centuries-old inscriptions found on bone and shells. However, only about 200 characters have been preserved and passed down, not enough for meaningful communication. The words can only be used to make simple records of dates, especially special dates for ancestral worship, weddings and funerals. The future does not look bright for the Shui written language — apart from elders of at least 60 years old, most Shui people cannot read their own language.

But when it comes





to crafts, the women of Bangao Village are very skilled in embroidery and needlework. The embroidered articles are mainly used by women in daily life, such as clothes, shoes, waistbands and baby carriers. The last item appears in four varieties. The first type uses horse mane wrapped in white and coloured silk threads to embroider lively floral and fauna patterns such as fish, birds and insects on the cloth. Two needles are employed and a month is needed to produce one carrier. It is most valuable and a definite dowry for any bride. A second kind is made by using threads of different colours to embroider flora and fauna patterns. It is very pretty, though not as fine as the first kind and is used for gifts to celebrate



1. Shui people have always been connected with water, and they all farm fish in their paddy fields.
2. Preparing ancestral food for the Duan Festival (by Yu Zhixin)
3. The unique pipe with delicate craving (by Guo Jianshe)
4. All embroideries are hand-made.
5. Women are gathered to finish their needlework. (by Shen Jun)
6. Only a few old people can understand the Shui language.



births. The third type uses embroidered pieces of different geometric patterns stitched onto the carrier and it is popular with middle-aged women. The last variety is made of pieces of blue cloth, in floral or fauna patterns, stitched onto the carrier. Involving the least work and the most inexpensive, this is most commonly used by Shui women.

The performance of copper drums and leather drums take the whole Duan Festival to a pulsating climax.

and leather drums. A copper drum is operated by two people to produce richer and stronger vibrations and echoes. The leather drum also produces a variety of sounds. Together they take the whole show to a pulsating climax.

Duan Festival

This is the Shui people's biggest festival, similar to the Han people's Chinese New Year. The Shuis also have their own calendar according to which, a year begins with the ninth lunar month. The Duan Festival is celebrated on a "Hai" day ("Hai" being the last of the Twelve Earthly Branches of the Chinese farming calendar, so one out of every twelve days is a "Hai" day). As there are five "Hai" days during the period from the late eighth month to the early tenth, Shui people of different areas mark the festival on different "Hai" days. Bangao Village, for example, celebrates the second "Hai" day, which I unfortunately missed when visiting them.

The celebration usually lasts for five to ten days. Each family will prepare by cleaning the house and worshipping ancestors. Only fish is allowed, and meat is barred from the altar table. On top of that, none other than vegetable oil can be used for cooking or lighting lamps. On the first day of the celebration, everybody puts on new clothes, shares a meal of fish and bean curd and goes to the horse racing on a nearby mountain slope. The race calls for each rider to fight his way out of a crowded valley first, before racing to the top of the slope. The winner is triumphantly adorned with a red cloth crown.

The most exciting event is the drum performance at the drum square. There are copper drums

1. Drum is considered a sacred musical instrument. (by Ji Gang)
2. Horse racing on Duan Festival (by Bai Shiming)
3. The celebration of Duan Festival (by Ji Gang)
4. The Shui bride cannot let her feet touch the ground on her wedding day, and she needs to be carried by her brother or uncle to her new home. (by Wu Jiancheng)
5. The lusheng (a kind of bamboo flute) performance is also a part of Duan Festival. (by Yu Zhixin)





Spectacular Forest of Summits

Photos & Article by Huang Yanhong

I have seen many concrete jungles in the past, but rarely have I come across a forest of summits. The name "Ten thousand Summit Forest" is striking enough, and no one should miss the chance to see these astonishing mountain ranges when visiting Xingyi in the southwest of Guizhou.

Located in the southwest of Guizhou, bordering Yunnan and Guangxi, Xingyi is surrounded by mountains. Xingyi belongs to the Wumong mountain system, and these ranges take up three-quarters of the land area of 3,000 km².

A billion years ago, when plate tectonic movement was at its zenith, the plate in the region began to sink. The part that sunk the least became today's mountains. Some of the mountains were formed as the plates bent. This immense land transformation has created the awe-inspiring forest of summits today.

About 12 km south of the county centre sits a mountain named Baomu, 1,644 m above sea level. Standing on its peak I could see the two summit forests. Together they constitute the Wanfenglin (Ten Thousand Summit Forest). The eastern summit forest is about 15 km long and 100 km² in area. Wider and longer still is the western summit forest, which covers an area of 200 km². It lingers for a distance of 35 km ranging from Xiawutun to Wanfenghu (Ten Thousand Summit Lake), south of Lubuge. South of the Wanfenglin is the Nanpanjiang River, dissecting Guangxi and Guizhou. Further north are some even more extensive mountain ranges.



Hidden for 400 Years

We went to the western summit forest first. Going south from the town of Xingyi for 15 km, we arrived at Nahui Village of Xiawutun Township, the best outlook for the forest.

With our car parked at the entrance, we walked down along the highway for about one kilometre and hiked up again. There was a road for sightseeing coaches. We climbed up along the gravel path and reached the top, where we looked out on the summit forest. The faraway ranges undulated like big waves, and some sprang straight from the ground like mushrooms shooting out of the soil after rain. The boundless mountain ranges resembled a sea of mountains.

Between the ranges lay thousands of acres of farmland. During the farming season, farmers were transplanting rice

The immense land transformation has created the awe-inspiring forest of summits today.

seedlings. Between the fields and the hills flew a tranquil river called River Yulong (Fish Case). There was a plain stone bridge

linking the households with the other world. An enormous banyan opened up like an umbrella, shading the entrance of the village. The summits forest here had been hidden for more than three centuries, and it was only rediscovered a couple of years ago.

Developed in the past couple of years, agricultural tourism has started rather late in Guizhou. We went into a restaurant called Nongjiale (Green field flavours). On the shore of the River Yulong, this restaurant had outdoor seatings for tourists to chat over a cup of tea. The green scenery all around creates a serene picture: paddy fields,

1. The spectacular Wanfenglin (by Lu Xianyi)



The giant fracture in the Summit-Forest of Xingyi is known as "the most stunning scar on earth".

water buffalos, shepherd boys, and large banyans.

This restaurant of a little bamboo house was packed with customers. Our table was in the open area and we ordered a few home cooked dishes together with a little barrel of steamed rice permeated with the aroma of wood.

We later learned that there were over 30 businesses run by farmers in Xiawutun. They were all doing well. Since they have suffered for many generations, they can now make the best of the stunning scenery in the area. With a few chairs and tables in place and dishes to prepare, they can make a decent living that is far beyond their expectations.

The locals dash to this area on weekends. They do not hike or go sightseeing, but rather, they enjoy socialising in the yards of the farming households. Some like to work on the fields. A villager pointed at an elderly lady and said to me, "the old lady over there lives by the fields. And she always has tourists asking to plough her field. I really don't understand why you city dwellers would want to do this. Sometimes you can upset visitors if you don't let them plough."

The best place to view the eastern summit forest is the way to Bajie Village. Since fewer tourists go to the eastern summit forest, the pavilion lookout is situated on a lonesome summit. The words "The Number One Lookout for the Ten Thousand Summits" are inscribed over the gate. Down the hill is a little path leading up to an ethnic village. Ethnic costumes of various kinds and even a body-sized bamboo pipe can be found there. We climbed to the top of the hill and reached the pavilion where we could see the multi-layered mountains. When the mountain breeze brushed through, all the bushes waved around, and even the mountains in the distance seemed to wiggle along.

The Most Stunning Scar on Earth

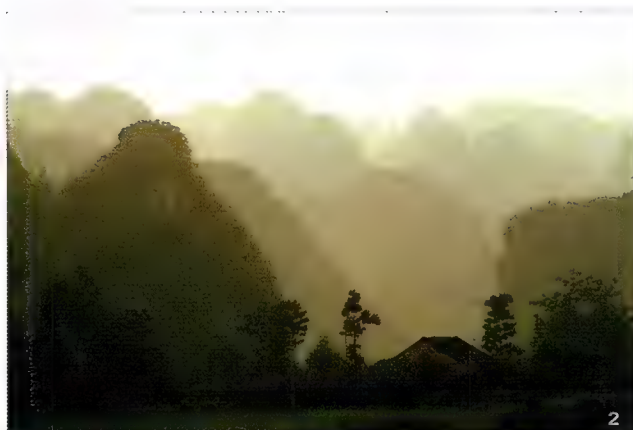
Apart from the farmyards and households in the Summit-Forest of Xingyi, there is also a giant fracture dubbed the most stunning scar on earth — River Maling (Horse Watershed).

On our arrival, a rainstorm had just passed through and greatly increased the river flow. The current raged at full speed down the river valleys. For every dozen metres, a waterfall tumbled down, some as high as 280 m. In the major scenic region, you will run into 13 waterfalls in one area.

Malin River Canyon is a tributary on the northern side of the River Nanpanjiang, beginning at Mt. Wumong. After prolonged weathering and erosion, a deep canyon has formed, with a width of 50-150 m and a depth of 100-500 m. It is suggested that the riverbed of the canyon has a submerged underground flow. After millions of years, the underground water and the surface water eroded the

soluble rocks. Various caves were enlarged and then the roofs collapsed. As time goes by, the underground flow is exposed creating the stunning fracture in the area.

1. The Wanfenghu Lake (by Zhou Wei)
2. The view of the farmlands near Wanfenglin
3. The 30 restaurants here are run by farmers, and visitors can sample their authentic home cooking.
4. The most stunning scar on earth: Maling River Canyon (by Xie Guanghui)







Exploring River Getu

Photos & Article by Xie Guanghui

The River Getu is a mysterious stream, meandering through various daunting caves that are piled with coffins. It is also full of stories, such as the tale about an ethnic group returning to their eastern homeland. Legend has it that treasures had been stored inside the walls of the caves. But only rock climbers who have the agility of a spider can uncover these secrets.

plunged into the cave and disappeared. It turns out that they hide themselves underground, becoming a single undercurrent.

Getu is dotted with large and gigantic caves; the number of caves is mind-boggling. There are 30 caves lain in an area within the radius of 10 km.

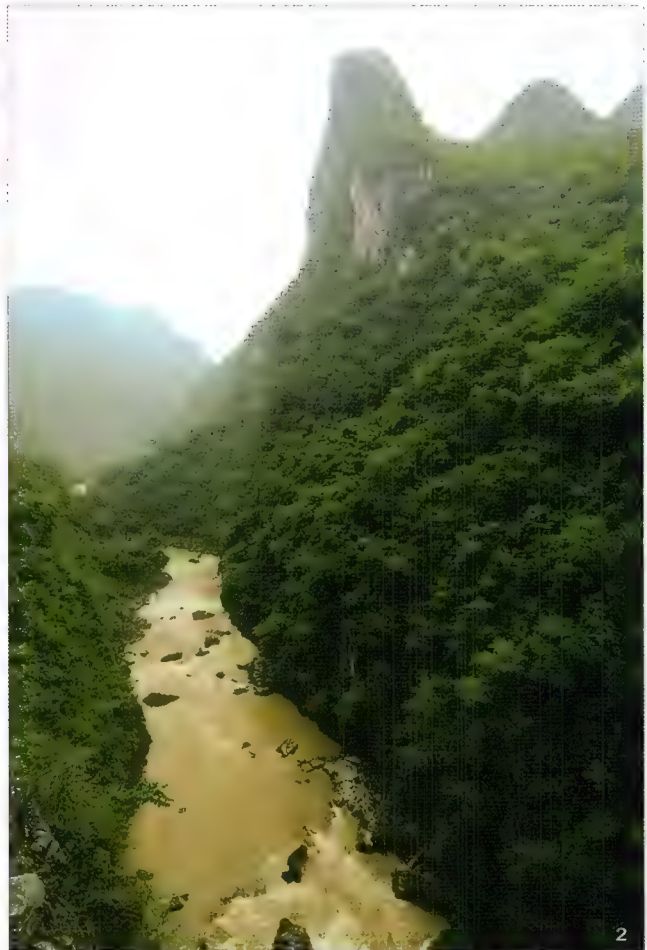
The main cave is called Yanzi (Swallow) Cave. As its name suggests, flocks of swallows stay here. Some people even believe the birds may have come all the way from Malaysia. When thousands of swallows leave the cave in the early morning and come back late at night, they create a dazzling blackout.

The Suspended Coffin in Tianxing Cave

Right outside of Yanzi Cave, we took the speedboat up the River Getu to Tianxing (Heavenly Star) Cave.

After some heavy downpours, the river rises in level about a metre and turns yellowish, whereas it used to be crystal clear and emerald green on a normal day. We rode for about 10 km, only to find an enormous hill blocked our way. I wondered if the river was going to disappear again, since they tend to go in and out of

1. Tourists enjoying the great performance of the "spiderman"
2. A panoramic view of River Getu from Yanzi Cave



2

Having passed Houchang Township, we followed the Houchang River to River Getu scenic region. When we had almost reached Luoqing Village, the river suddenly disappeared and took a detour into a cave. Stranger still, a couple of hundred metres down the road, a similar phenomenon occurred. River Getu, all of a sudden,



different caves. Nevertheless, our speedboat brought us to Tianxing Cave.

At 110 m high, the Tianxing Cave has strong water current. The rocks on both sides of the cave are erratic and rugged. The strangest phenomenon here is a series of suspended coffins on the cliffs. These coffins are interred in the natural caves and the locals refer it as the "cave burial". All the hanging coffins are from the ancestors of the Miao ethnic group of the River Getu region. Why and how they put the coffins there remains a puzzle.

We struggled to climb up and took a closer look at the coffins. Some are very decrepit, and the earliest one was put there six centuries ago, and the latest eight decades ago. The locals told us that before 1988, more than 200 coffins were placed in caves.

Longing for the East

Suspended coffins in Getu are placed differently from those in other areas. The coffins themselves are

distinctive also. They are all assembled in pieces, which imply that it is possible that they were put together after being carried up to the cliffs. Another bizarre detail is that all the coffins are facing east. Also, there is a little village called Jiaogan in the River Getu area, where two families of the Miao minority live. In the Miao Dialect, the name of the village is, "I am going home." All these people have history of hardship. Centuries ago, endless warfare pushed the Miao ancestors to move from the east to the distant southwest. The name of the village reminded them to fight their way home. The locals also told us that the funeral in the region is a grand ceremony. It buries the saddles of the horses, knives, bows and arrows, as well as hat, along with the body. It signifies that the persistent longing of the hill tribes for their homeland. Even though they failed to return to homeland in their lifetime, they wanted their soul to do so.

Hanging coffins, therefore, still offer us some hints to unravel the mystery. They are placed in the caves for the sake of preservation as well as perseverance — to follow their ancestors' desire to be back home, body and soul.

Three Spidermen on the Cliffs

There are three "spidermen", the experts of free climb, live in the area. Looking at them climbing from afar is like seeing spiders scuttling on the cliffs.

Despite the fact that there has not been a single accident all these years, local insurance companies still refuse to insure these men. It's hardly surprising though.

One of the "spidermen" is called Wang Fengchuan. Many tourists come to the region just to watch him climb. When entering Yanzi Cave with us in the speedboat, he was sent to the shore of the cliffs. Long before the boat was still, he had already hopped over to the other side.

In an instant, tourists from a few boats all looked up. At

first, Wang agilely darted up a rock a couple of metres high. Hands and feet sharply and swiftly employed, he climbed

at an escalating speed. Our guide said that Wang is the fastest climber of the three spidermen. Climbing up the 108 m cliff from the foot took him about five minutes.

In no time, he disappeared from our sight. We all held out breath and anxiously scanned the cliff. Seconds later, he reappeared between the fractures of the rocks high up. Every now and then, he pretended to run into a dead end; yet, he would swiftly jump to another rock and follow a

The grand funeral signifies the persistent longing of the hill tribes for their homeland.

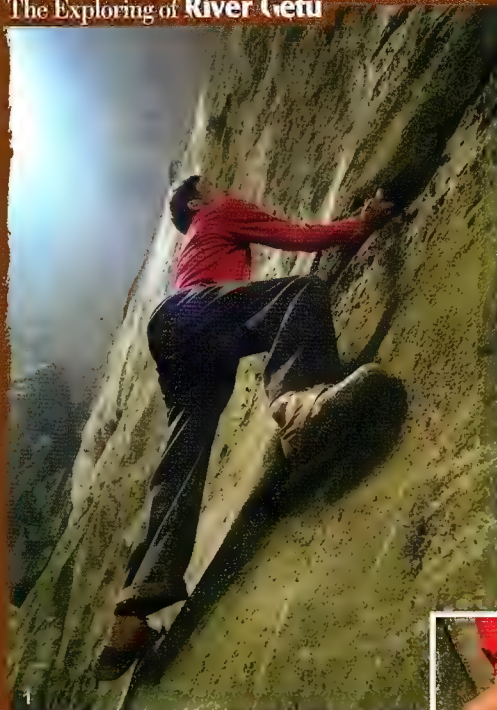
1. The three spidermen are waving their flag and cheering at the top of the cliff.
2. Plunging into Yanzi Cave abruptly, River Getu turns into an underground current.
3. The cave burial in Tianxing Cave remains a mystery.
4. The 120-m Yanzi Cave has been the habitat of swallows for centuries.



3



4



new path. In no time, a red flag was waving at the top. "Spiderman has reached the top!" he shouted while waving his flag. All of us thundered a round of applause. This time, he took just slightly more than three minutes.

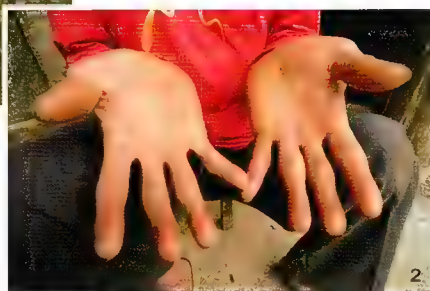
"Why would you attempt such a daring vocation?" I asked him.

"There is a

five, I had an intense ache in my leg and took an injection. Soon afterwards, I became like this. As for climbing, my grandpa did it for a living, though my father never did. In the past, I climbed to collect potassium nitrate. At about 10, we did not have money to buy any fertiliser. Thus, I sought out Master Luo and asked him to teach me how to climb. I learnt to climb in order to collect the swallow manure. He was very hesitant at first, as I was handicapped. Later, after a year, I finally learnt to put my strength on my arms to compensate for my leg."

"I then started to collect swallow manure to make a living. A 60-catty bag of swallow manure costs about five or ten yuan. On a good day, I can get about 300 catties. Yet, these days, people prefer to use chemical fertiliser and no one wants to use swallow manure anymore."

Huang can now make quite a decent living with tourism booming in recent years. Now, he can afford to buy a television for his family and even build a house.



special stone in the Yanzi Cave that can be used to extract potassium nitrate. People use a brush to scrape it into a can. After sieving, the powder will be boiled into potassium nitrate (half a pot is about 20 kg). They will dump the ashes from burnt wood on the mixture. The white ashes will turn blue. They then keep it for hunting wild boars. This chemical costs a lot. Each day we can make about three to four yuan. I learned rock climbing with my dad since I was 12. We were very poor before, but rock climbing has improved our living. Nowadays, I am slightly better off than the others. Normally I climb up to get the potassium nitrate. During farming seasons, I climb up to get some swallow manure, which makes excellent fertiliser."

"Later, we all learnt the edible swallow's nest are very valuable. Then we began to climb up to collect the bird's nests. Of course, I seldom eat it. Most of them were for sale. Feather swallow's nest cost 100-200 yuan a catty. Sometimes I can get about four to five catties a day. In the past we had no concept of preservation and had damaged the habitats of the swallows extensively. Since there are hardly any swallows left now, we no longer collect nests."

Triumph over Disability

In the early evening, we visited another spiderman-Huang Xiaobao. I was taken by surprise. How could this middle-aged man, crippled in his right leg, climb up the sheer cliffs?

Huang explained to me, "I was not born lame. At about

The Fantasy of Hidden Treasures

Luo Fake is the master of Huang Xiaobao. For a long period of time, he was the only rock climber in the area of River Getu. This naturally made many people suspicious. Since the Cultural Revolution prompted many people to hide away their treasures, rumour had it that the treasures were hidden up in the cliffs for years. Nonetheless, the sheer cliffs deterred anyone from getting close. If you want to know where the treasures are, you perhaps need to ask this spiderman.

When we met Luo, he was on his way down the cliff. When asked Luo whether the rumour was real, the reticent master shook his head smilingly. We pressed further, and he said that in the cliff of Ertong Mountain, a sword and dagger had been found. We asked no more, for we realised that people who lured by treasure would weave all kinds of fantasies.

Master Luo is the seventh generation climber in his family. I couldn't help but contemplated about the hanging coffins in Tianxing Cave and Jiaogan Village. We saw Huang assembling a coffin the day we visited him. Perhaps people like him were responsible for putting the coffins up there? Apart from them, who else could carry such duty? In any case, it matters little whether Luo had a secret mission or not, as long as the miraculous rock climbing skills can be preserved and passed on.

Rumour had it that treasures were hidden up in the cliffs for years.

1. Ancestors have passed their rock climbing skills down the generations.

2. After years of climbing, spiderman Huang Xiaobao's hands are deformed.



Deep in the Hills

Cave Tribes

Photos & Article
by Huang Yanhong

I have always thought that the "cave tribes" was a term used only in history textbooks. Never could I imagine that there are still tribes living in caves today! Living a simple and self-contained life, the tribe I visited even had caves served as the soccer pitch, living room, and primary school.

River Getu comes right out of a gigantic cave, and it meanders up and down in the river valleys with both sides surrounded by sheer cliffs. In the midst of these cliffs lies a tribe living in caves.

We took a visit to the mysterious Yanzi Cave and were in awe because of the rock climbers. Yet a day later, it was our turn to attempt the climb.

The "path" to the cave tribe was worse than expected. The rain made the erratic rocks extremely slippery for climbing. The steep slope forced us to use both our hands and feet. We climbed a while and rested a while. It took us 40 minutes to reach the lower cave, a cave that goes between a passage through two sides of a hill.

Little Wang, my companion, told me that there are the Upper, Middle and Lower caves. In the past, no one dared to live inside these caves because the road to Changshun requires them to pass by the entrance of the cave. And

1. The students and teachers of Middle Cave Primary School

there would be nowhere for the residents to hide from danger or bad weather. We rested a bit in the Lower Cave and continued to climb up. Having gone past the bamboo forest, we reached the huge Middle Cave. The intricate path brought us to Zhaimen (Gate of the brigands). Here, the bamboo gate is filled with decorations of Miao religion: a bamboo knife, barrel and red string (all used to cast away omens).

Nineteen Families Living in the Cave

The Middle Cave is over 100 m wide, 50 m high and 215 m deep. The ancient wood structure

was built alongside the cave walls. At the end of the cave is a school. About 100 people live there together, composed of four major families: the Wu, the Wang, the Luo, and the Liang. They all belong to the Miao tribe. They still keep the traditional lifestyle and customs. Most wives in the cave are from other towns. When an elderly person passed away, a "demon master" would come to take charge of the funeral ceremony. A Miao dialect song, "I come from the east", would be sung to sent the soul of

*The caves are warm in winter and cool in summer.
There is no need for roof and the cave area is free from bugs' bites.*

the deceased back to the east.

Living in caves has its advantages. The caves are warm in winter and cool in summer. There is no need for roof and the cave area is free from bugs' bites. The government in recent years has built new houses outside the cave, yet the villagers are reluctant to relocate. They tried to live in the houses for a couple of days, and soon after, they moved back to the Middle Cave. They are not used the to hot summer, cold winter and the rains.

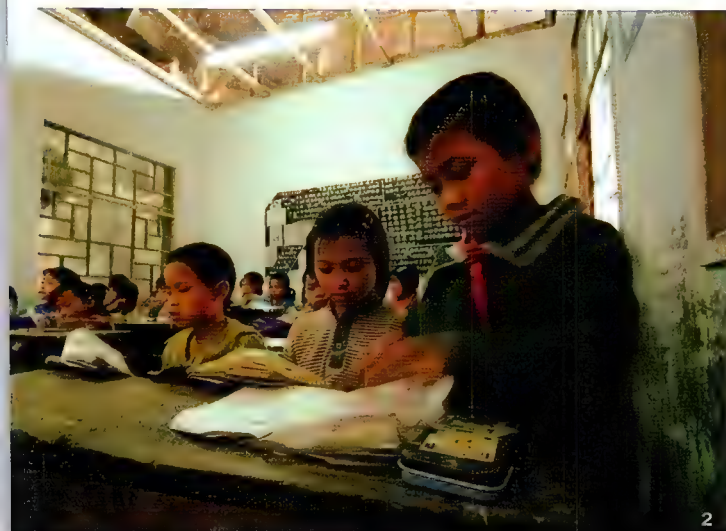
For a long time, life in the caves has been very simple.

People lived without much interference from the outer world. In recent years, however,

with the growing reputation of the primary school in the cave, this deserted village has begun to draw more attention. More visitors come here and the villagers are no longer shocked.

The 56-year-old Wang Fengguang was sitting in his front yard and watching his son cut up wood with an electric planer. He pondered about his plan to open a guesthouse. "No so long ago, hundreds of tourists came to experience the life of living in the cave. All the families





were fully occupied and they even killed all their chickens. Although people here usually would not charge guests for rent, preparing a meal with chicken will cost tourists up to a 100 yuan," he said. This is also why he hurried to have his new house built.

A Three-Hour Walk to School

When we arrived at the Middle Cave, the last lesson had just ended. Teacher Wang Qigang waved his iron rod and rang the bell loud and clear. Having heard the bell, children drifted out of the classroom in excitement. Some children were playing in the playground and some began to have their meals. These days, the school received a donation of rice and so the life of the children has been much improved. Wang said that in the past, children usually brought with them corn noodles (a staple) in a bamboo lunchbox. Some poor families could not provide lunch for their children. They had to walk for an hour home after school, and had dinner then.

Only a dozen or so students live inside the cave, and the rest are from the other towns. Some live far from the village and they have to walk for three hours to school. I

asked the teacher why they would come here to school despite the long walk.

Wang told me that it was due to the low tuition fees of the school. Most schools ask for 70 yuan a term for tuition for primary school education. The Middle Cave Primary School only charges 20 yuan. If they are sponsored, some children don't even have to pay. Therefore, apart from the children living in the cave, most children come from outside the village.

A year ago, the classroom was built from corn stalks, but the conditions now are much better. All the teachers have their staff rooms, and they can make about US \$50 a month. Their salary is double of what they used to make. All these improvements are attributed to a respectable old American man.

The Charity of a Kind American Man

A Minnesotan, Frank learned about the situation of the Middle Cave Primary School from the newspaper. He was much moved by the news — especially after seeing the pictures of the three classrooms built from corn stalks. He decided to take a trip there.

In November 2002, the 79-year-old Frank arrived at the cave. Along with him came his friend, 73-year-old Thomas. The two men toiled up the sheer slope and brought with them school bags, clothes and stationary. They even bought cooking oil, salt and other food for the cave dwellers. They donated US \$3,500 to the residents and helped bring electricity to them. Each family was given 600 yuan to buy a cow to milk, and each teacher was given US \$50 per month salary. A year later, the old man returned and it was Christmas. Each family received 800 yuan as a gift for Christmas. December 23 of 2003 was a big day for the Middle Cave — the day when electricity arrived! Frank donated nearly 120,000 yuan to bring light to the cave dwellers.

Soon after, a great "stove" was built at the entrance of the cave, and the school also got a 30-inch television placed in the playground. On top of the TV, two banners say, "High-quality teaching and diligent studying — towards a bright future". Also, a piece of land has been reserved for a basketball court.

There is a reservoir deep down the cave. All water flowing from the streams over the cave have been channelled towards the reservoir. The biggest challenge for the cave dwellers in the past was the shortage of water. There was not enough water for everyone and people had to carry water from another cave. During dry season, they had to go all the way down the hill to carry water. It took them a couple of hours to and fro. The villagers used to say, "we sweat more than the amount of water we carry."

1. Television enriches the lives of the cave dwellers.
2. Students from poor family work exceptionally hard.
3. Building more accommodations for tourists (by Shen Jun)



Fortunately, Frank has brought more attention to this long-forgotten cave tribe. Now, a reservoir has been built outside the Middle Cave. Villagers no longer need to wait for the dripping of water from the roof of the cave and neither do they have to go down the hill to carry water.

The kind act also moved Wang Dongling from Henan. This generous young lady is an inspector of the Gold Mine Hospital of Henan's Sanmenxia Town. Having learnt about the situation of the primary school from a TV program, she was much moved and asked for a half-year unpaid leave from her bureau to come and work there.

Later, when the department head of her office learnt about the whole issue from the newspaper, he even came to visit her. Also, on behalf of the bureau, he donated over 10,000 yuan to the school, and gave the young lady 1,000 yuan salary a month. (Later, I learnt that Wang Dongling had donated her salary to a PhD student who was diagnosed with final-stage leukaemia. He is now devoting his final hours into urging people to donate bone marrow. And he has also given all his savings, 50,000 yuan, for testing fees for bone marrow donors.)

Missing the Kids

With the school term and Wang's half-year leave finished, she returned to Sanmenxia. Shortly after,

however, she revisited again. "I really miss the children and what the American old man has done was so moving," she said to me. And the excitement of children was beyond words. They made up a nursery rhyme to praise Ms. Wang, which has been written down on the wall of the cave.

Wang Dongling is well-loved in the village. She lived in Wang Fengguo's family, and her landlord was like an auntie to her.

Simple as Wang's "home" seemed, it was very cosy and unique. Orchids were placed in the bamboo baskets. There were little drawers, tables, all borrowed from the villagers. While we were chatting, a violent shake came behind the bamboo curtains. "It's a rat," she said. Wang is very afraid of rats. Yet, she can't help these unwelcome guests from paying a visit to her in the middle of the night.

When writing this article, I learnt that when Wang Dongling was about to leave the primary school and return to her bureau to work, she had a car accident and was gravely injured. That day, she hurried to a street fair 10 km from the Middle Cave in hopes of getting some souvenirs for the children. On her way back, a farming car rolled down the road and 25 people were injured. Wang Dongling was one of them.

I took out a picture taken in the Middle Cave. In the picture, Wang Dongling was playing soccer with the children.

The low tuition fee benefits many children in the village and the surrounding area.



I made a get-well card for her, and inside I wrote: "Hope you get well soon and be as lively as you are in the picture."

Middle Cave Primary School

The new principal Mr. Yang was one of the founders of Middle Cave Primary School. When asked about the primary school, he was full of recollections. In 1984, there were 15 families in Middle Cave village, 55 people in total. It was the first time he had heard of such a big cave tribe. Having realised that the children there did not receive any formal education, the county government decided to bring in a school there. The government gave him 200 yuan to get a lamp, a blackboard, a simple teacher's desk, together with a classroom desk, bought for 10 yuan. Students had to bring their own chairs to school. In October the same year, the school was open. At the time, there was only one grade and one substitute teacher. There was no textbook. The books used to combat illiteracy among farmers were used as teaching materials. It was not until the second year that official textbooks and full-time teacher arrived.

Although I wanted to talk to Principal Yang for a little longer, he had to teach evening courses shortly after. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9-10 pm, teachers from Middle Cave Primary School take turns to teach evening courses.

Eradicating Illiteracy among Mature Students

With darkness fallen, the "nightlife" of Middle Cave begins. Evening became livelier in the Middle Cave after the arrival of electricity. The television in the playground was embraced by a busy crowd of villagers — all joining to watch a martial arts movie. A couple of children were concentrating on studying in a classroom. Some villagers had just come home from their fields. Steam from cooking gently rose to the top of the cave and dissipated. Houses without roofs were all exposed, and the lights of the family were shining against the cave wall.

Inside the classrooms are diligent children studying and some mature students. They are on average over the age of 40 and mostly Miao women. Over half of them have never been to school before. They came voluntarily to join



the class to learn reading and writing. They did not have to pay for tuition. Apart from the cave dwellers, there was also one from man from another village. He told me that he lived down the hill and it took him more than an hour to walk up. Thirty years ago, he said, he had been to school for one term. Due to financial constraints, he could not carry on. Now, as long as there's a lesson, he'll be here, undeterred by bad weather.

Breakfast at Six

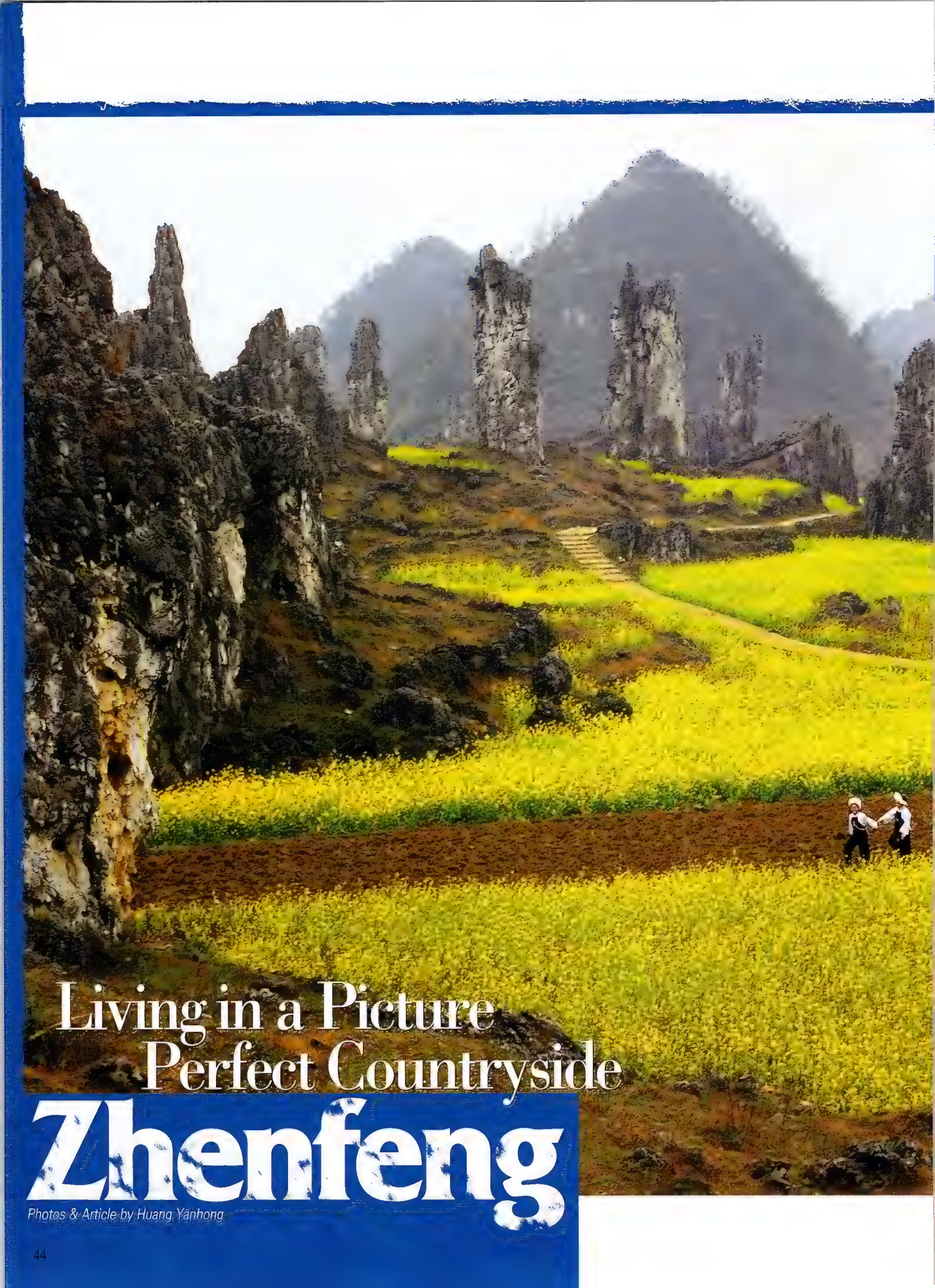
At night, I stayed with a village family with Wang.

At around six, the students were awake. A few girls began to light some wood to prepare the morning meal. The teachers told us that with the donations, now both the teachers and students could have rice for their meals. But all broadening children brought with them a potato, because they would stay at school for a week, and only potatoes are appropriate because they are durable. These students could not afford to bring meat. If available, they would bring some lard.

The day slowly broke. A beam of sunshine fell upon the hills in the distance. The breakfast preparation was still on the way. The flame from the fire made the little faces of the children exceptionally red. They were warm and soft like the morning beams outside.

1. After school, students line up to leave school.
2. Wang Dongling helps baby-sit her landlord's grandchild.
3. The giant cave provides shelter for the tribe.
4. When the day breaks, the boarding students wake up to make breakfast.





Living in a Picture
Perfect Countryside

Zhenfeng

Photos & Article by Huang Yanhong



Most city dwellers fantasise about a vacation in the wild nature.

Situated in the southwest of Guizhou, Zhenfeng is the perfect green paradise that people long for.

Zhenfeng is a county in the southwestern province of Guizhou. The couple of days I spent in Zhenfeng brought me the most wonderful mornings and evenings. I would jump into a three-wheel car and ride for one or two kilometers, enjoying the green fields, little streams, waterfalls, forests throughout the farmlands. I have been to many places but never have I encountered a peaceful haven like this.

The charming village has ancient streets, old Chinese medicine practitioners and softly-lit temples. And not far from the county, there is the 1157-m Mt. Phoenix, the highest mountain in Zhenfeng. Its topography is very distinctive: rugged cliffs dotted with eccentric rocks and streams. There is also the Luoren (Sinking) Pool. It is named such because many people had drowned in the pool before. On the shore, a Buddhist rhyme was inscribed to ask for blessings and protection for the place.

The only flaw in this place is probably the poor standard of hygiene. If the waterfalls and streams can be rid of the sewage, I believe Zhenfeng will definitely be one of the prettiest towns in China.

Preserving the Environment

My favourite place is Zhulinbao (Bamboo Forest Fort) Stone Forest. There is no admission ticket required. Yet, you won't find loads of tourists there.

1. Zhenfeng has preserved its natural ecology. (by Li Dan)
2. The breast-like summits have become a tourist highlight in Zhenfeng.



This amazing scenery still sleeps quietly in nature. Farmyards are embracing the

stone forest, which is filled with cornfields. Every now and then a little shepherd boy would bring his cows to cross the stone bridge. Deep inside the caves are eccentric rocks, all shooting out of the ground. The greatest thing is that, of course, you can roam everywhere for free.

We took pictures at random in the midst of rocks and cornfields, letting nature to stir our hearts deeply. There is a rock pillar in the field — an object of worship for the villagers. Colourful ribbons have been tied to this pillar, and incense is burnt nearby. The pillar is inscribed: "Jade Emperor, the General of Stone forest". No wonder the place is so well preserved, for a general has been guarding the area all along!

When leaving the stone forest, I was struggling to keep this scenery secret. The last thing I wanted is to have an influx of tourists to ruin this wonder.

Bandit Cave

I found Lianhua Township 10 km away from Zhenfeng. In no time, I came to Tunshang, a place with a big cave.

The cave is about eight metres long, with a square shaped entrance. No wonder it is called Sifang (Square) Cave. Water seeps out from the underflow on the floor of the cave. It is a very clear flow called River Nawai. This river flow joins River Beixiang forming River Datian, which later enters River Beipanjiang.

Both sides of River Nawai are very charming, with green fields and high treadmills lining up along. It was only half a century ago that some bandits had also fallen for this area. There is a well-sheltered and hidden bandit cave up the hill, piled with stones and could house up to 30 people. There were two entrances to the cave, and a few bullet holes could be seen on the walls of the cave. Inside the cave, there was also another little cave, protected by some fences. It was likely the stronghold of the bandit leaders.

The Unique Bouyei Tribe

There is a village called Yanyu (Rock Fish) in Zhenfeng County. All the families are weavers and their lives are very traditional.

In this 3,000-household area, residents are composed of the Bouyei tribe of three villages, Nahe, Nashan and Namo. Yanyu Township has formed over six centuries ago. In the past, they were the people without written words. Interestingly enough, a Russian expert came to the area and helped them create their own written language in the 1950s.

A few kilometres from the county will bring you to the landmark of the township: Sanzhuxiang (Three Incense Burners). But there is only one "incense

burner" (which is in reality a four-metre stone pillar) left. There used to be three, but two were demolished during the Cultural Revolution.

Near the township is a cliff with a natural cave. Inside the cave is an altar. A family of villagers was burning incense there. They arrived early in the morning, killed a chicken, and stuck its feathers onto the stone wall. On seeing us, they enthusiastically gave us drinks. The 75-year-old Wang Changzhong said, "last year, we came to pray for a grandson. Shortly after, our wish came true. Now the grandson is one year old, and we came back to worship and give thanks."

It is a very traditional township. As it was farming season, only a handful of people were there. Farmers were busy planting rice seedlings. Water buffalos were toiling in the mud. On the street, a couple of Bouyei women were weaving together. They preserve, to this day, the most traditional weaving techniques and skills. The villagers told me that in less busy seasons, the women of the whole town will gather together to weave. It would be quite a

The Bouyei people have had no written words until a Russian helped them create their own language in the 1950s.



spectacular scene.

I realised that most women's costumes had preserved their own ethnic characteristics: hand-made and dyed short top, long pants, turban, flowery belts, and the five-inch sleeve cuffs woven from green cloth. The most special item is the apron, embroidered with sophisticated patterns, but regrettably, some of these embroidering skills have been lost.



1. The Bouyei women gather together to weave.
2. The Bouyei has a distinct weaving method.
3. The street fair of Wanlan Township is very crowded, full of local food.
4. Wine cellars in Zhenfeng County
5. Beipanjiang River Canyon north of Zhenfeng



Travel Tips

Photos by Huang Yanhong

Article by Huang Yanhong and Xie Guanghui

To visit southern Guizhou, you can start from Guiyang, the provincial capital, which is a hub of railway transportation in Southwest China. From here, four railways link Guizhou with Guangxi, Yunnan, Hunan and Sichuan provinces, and direct passenger trains run to major Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Chongqing, Kunming and Chengdu. A ticket for a soft sleeper from Guangzhou to Guiyang costs 337 yuan* and a soft seat costs 210 yuan.

From the airport situated nine kilometres east of Guiyang city centre, there are flights to more than 20 big cities, including Beijing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Tianjin, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Wuhan, Chongqing, Kunming, Chengdu, Fuzhou, Changsha, Zhengzhou, Nanchang, Dalian, Kunming, etc. It costs 770 yuan to fly from Guangzhou to Guiyang and 940 yuan from Shenzhen.

Scenic Spots in Southern Guizhou

Ziyun

Long-distance bus: Two daily shuttle buses run between Guiyang and Ziyun; it takes three hours to cover the distance of 182 km. You can also go to Anshun first and change to a local bus.

Accommodation: Ziyun County Government Reception House: 50 yuan for a standard room, 15 yuan for a bed in an ordinary room.

Tour Guide:

Getu River Scenic Area: It is 38 km from the county seat of Ziyun and costs around 50 yuan by taxi. The



A cruise on the Getu River

*US \$1 ~ 8 yuan



The Tourist Service Centre at the entrance to the Maling River Scenic Area

fare for a medium-sized bus is six yuan, but the service is not scheduled. Entry ticket: 40 yuan. Many farmer's inns and restaurants are available outside the entrance, and it costs about 10 yuan for a bed. At Dahe, a Miao village, there are four or five farmer's inns; a meal of chicken and four or five local dishes costs 80 yuan.

Middle Cave (Zhongdong): To reach the cave, you need to take a bus to Lower Cave (Xiadong) Power Station and walk up the hill; or you can set out from Yanzi (Swallow) Cave and go through Zhulin (Bamboo Grove) Village and Upper Cave (Shangdong) to Middle Cave. The latter route is flat, but you have to walk all the way.

At Middle Cave, you have to stay with a Miao family for the night, which costs 5-10 yuan.

Itineraries:

Day 1: Visit Tianxing (Heavenly Star) Cave and burial caves with suspended coffins in the morning; have lunch at Dahe Village; go to the Yanzi Cave in the afternoon to see the rock-climbing. If you are still not tired, you can continue your journey to Shangchuan Cave.

Day 2: Go to Middle Cave in the morning. Stay for a night in the cave to experience the special lifestyle.

Day 3: Leave the county town of Ziyun.

Note: Those in good physical condition and with an adventurous nature can contact the local tourism bureau to visit the world's second largest limestone cave, or go further to probe the Manggu Valley lying behind Shangchuan Cave.

Zhenfeng

Long-distance bus: The shuttle bus goes from Ziyun to Zhenfeng via Anshun; journey, two-and-a-half hours; bus fare, 20 yuan.

Accommodation: Xingzhen Hotel: 80 yuan for a standard room, 70 yuan for a single room; Huaqiao

Hotel: 80 yuan for a standard room.

Local delicacy: Zhenfeng sweet rice, two yuan/bowl.

Tour guide:

Shuangru (Twin Breast) Peak: Like two breasts, the peaks have been chosen as the logo for Zhenfeng tourism.

Transport: There is a bus going from the county town of Zhenfeng to Zhexiang every 20 minutes; bus fare, three yuan. You have to tell the driver or conductor if you want to make stops at the vistas free of charge on the way.

Sanchahe: This is a scenic zone based on a reservoir. The best season for a visit is autumn when the leaves have turned red.

Transport: Get a lift in the county seat or by roadside to reach Zhexiang, from where you can hire a tricycle for five yuan to reach Sanchahe.

Yanyuzhai, a Bouyei village: Situated deep in the mountains five kilometres from the county seat of Zhenfeng. Under its administration are the smaller villages of Namo, Nachan and Nahe.

Transport: There is no bus between the county town and Yanyuzhai, and the road condition is very bad. To go to the village, you need to take a bus to Minshan Park situated on the edge of the county town and hire a motor tricycle for six yuan. If time allows, you can take a motor cart carrying villagers, which costs only one or two yuan.

Sifang Cave: Besides the beautiful scenery, you can also see ruins of bandits' settlements.

Transport: The scenic spot is 18 km from the county seat. Since there is no bus service, you have to hire a car to make a round trip in a day.

Taoci (Ceramic) Village in Wanlan Township: There are shuttle buses going to the village 12 km from the county town of Zhenfeng. After getting off at Wanlan, you have to change to another vehicle to drive about

six kilometres up the mountain to reach the Taoci Village, where every household is a pottery or porcelain workshop.

Itineraries:

Day 1: Visit the Sanchahe Scenic Area, as well as the stone forest and Shuangru Peaks on the way. There is also a Bouyei village nearby called Nakong.

Day 2: Visit the Bouyei village, Yanyu, in the morning and hire a vehicle to see Sifang Cave and the ruins of the bandits' settlements in the afternoon.

Day 3: Leave Zhenfeng after visiting the Taoci Village in Wanlan Township.



The charming Wanfenglin Scenic Area

Anlong

Long-distance bus: A bus service is available every 20 minutes, and it costs 12 yuan/person.

Accommodation: Zhaodi Guesthouse: 80 yuan/single room;

Xinhecheng Hotel: 40 yuan/single room, 60 yuan/standard room.

Tour guide:

Zhaodi: Located in the northeast of the county seat of Anlong, the park features a lotus pond of 53,000 m². Entry ticket: two yuan/person.

Eighteen Gentlemen's Tomb: Inside the county town; charge for entry: five yuan.

Historical sites, such as the Ming-dynasty imperial army's drilling ground and the Qing-dynasty examination house, are free of charge for entry.

Xianheping Nature Reserve: This is a wild plant reserve in southwest Guizhou.

Transport: As there is no bus running from Anlong to Xianheping, you have to take a minibus (two yuan/person) to Xinglong and then hire a motorcycle to reach the mountain foot (10 yuan). It takes one-and-a-half hours to walk up the mountain.

Admission is free of charge; there is no restaurant or inn on the mountain.

Xiangchehe: In this village in Dongguang Township, the primitive method of incense making has been retained. It takes half an hour to go by shuttle bus; free for entry.

Itineraries:

Day 1: Visit the Eighteen Gentlemen's Tomb, Zhaodi and Imperial Palace in town.

Day 2: Go to Xianheping Nature Reserve.

Day 3: Leave Anlong in the afternoon after visiting Xiangchehe in the morning.

Xingyi

Long-distance bus: There is a bus driving from Anlong to Xingyi every 20 minutes; bus fare: 10 yuan.

Accommodation:

Xingyi Guesthouse: 188 yuan/standard room; Xingyin Guesthouse (on Tiejiang Street): 45 yuan/room; Jinhui Guesthouse (on Douya Street): 40 yuan/room.

Local delicacies:

Chicken meat dumplings: Served in the Zou Family Shop in Xingyi, the dumpling with chicken meat stuffing and chicken soup is very delicious.

Shu Family Noodles: The noodles are hand-made; the dough, made of a mixture of fine wheat flour and eggs, is pressed with a rag several times before being cut into thin noodles.

Shuabatou (brush head): This dish got its name because of its look. After being steamed for five or six minutes, the food is served with a condiment made of soy sauce, pepper and chopped green onion.

Sanhe Soup: This is a popular dish in southwest Guizhou, where it is a must on every dinner table. A special kind of rice, called "four-season bean rice", and meat are added to the cooked glutinous rice, together with other seasonings such as soy sauce, vinegar, green onion, pepper and hot pepper.

Tour guide:

Wanfenglin (Ten Thousand Peak Forest): The West Wanfenglin is seven kilometres from the county town.

Transport: Take a bus at the bus stop on Fumin Road, fare: two yuan. To go to the east part of the scenic area, which is 10 km from town, you can take a bus to Bajie Town, which is available every hour.

Entry ticket: 30 yuan/person (including cart tour up to the mountain); admission to scenic area: 33

yuan/person; battery cart: 15 yuan/single trip, 30 yuan/round trip.

Meal at a farmer's house: 20 yuan/person on average

Maling River: The scenic area is four kilometres from the county town of Xingyi, and is reachable by bus, fare: two yuan. It costs 15 yuan to get there by taxi. The charge for a taxi ride within the town is usually three yuan.

Entry ticket: 33 yuan (including three yuan for insurance cover up to 30,000 yuan); the entry is free for tourists who buy river drifting tickets.

River drifting: Section 1, from Maling Town to Tianxing Gallery, 13.7 km, two hours: 138 yuan; Section 2, from Tianxing Gallery to Zhaojiadu, 22 km, two-three hours: 168 yuan; Section three, from Zhaojiadu to Wanfeng Lake, 20 km, is not open to the public currently.

Ethnic Marriage Custom Museum: Marriage-related customs of the various ethnic groups in Guizhou, including Miao, Bouyei, Dong, Shui, Tujia, Hui, Yao and others, are displayed through photos, displays and models' performances.

Transport: It's three kilometres from the county seat, so you can take a bus from Xingyi to Xiawutun; fare: one yuan. It takes five minutes to walk to the museum after getting down at the road entrance. Admission: eight yuan.

Itineraries:

Day 1: Visit the Tianxing Gallery Scenic Area in the morning; float on the Maling River in the afternoon until reaching Zhaojiadu after three-and-a-half hours. Return to town.

Day 2: Morning: Visit the central scenery of the Wanfenglin Scenic Area to admire the East Wanfenglin and singing and dancing in the Bouyei style. Afternoon: Take a boat from Hongchun Ferry for a cruise on Wanfeng Lake (30-40 yuan for a boat), and get to the reservoir dam at Tianshen Bridge after an hour. Go back to town by bus.

Day 3: Visit West Wanfenglin; have lunch in a farmer's house; visit the Ethnic Marriage Custom Museum in



The Central Square of Xingyi is crowded with people at night.

the afternoon and then leave Xingyi.

Long-distance bus: It costs 80 yuan to go by bus from Xingyi to Guiyang; journey, 365 km, six hours.

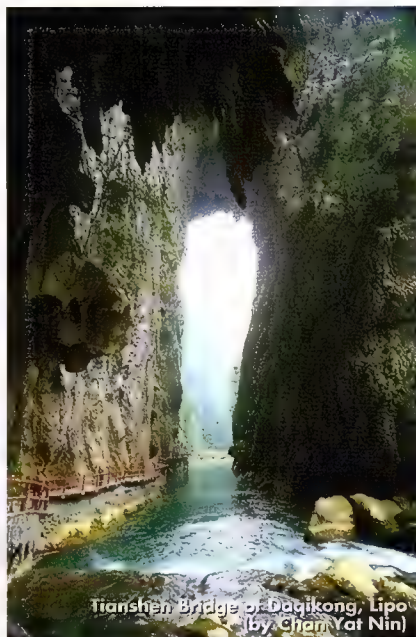
The Xingyi Airport opened flights on Monday, Wednesday and Friday to Guiyang and Kunming in July 2004.

Tourism Area

Included in this area are not only the Libo Zhangjiang National Scenic Area and the state-level nature reserve of Maolan Karst Forest, but also the nation's only autonomous county of the Shui people, Sandu. The Qiannan (Southern Guizhou) Bouyei and Miao Autonomous Prefecture is one of the regions in Guizhou where many minority ethnic groups live in concentrated communities. Here, you can see the colourful customs of the Shui, Yao, Bouyei and Miao, such as the Shui people's Duan and Mou festivals and the Yao people's courting customs and characteristic barns.

Lipo

Transport: The Libo Zhangjiang National Scenic Area is located in southern Guizhou, 320 km from Guiyang. You can take a tourist train from Guiyang to Mawei and then take a bus to Xiaoqikong Scenic Zone; or take a long-distance bus at the Tiyuguan Long-distance Bus Station to reach Lipo (four scheduled services a day), which takes five hours and costs 52 yuan. Or you can choose to go via Yundu, which is linked with the provincial capital by frequent bus services (140 km from Guiyang, two hours, 30 yuan). Every hour, a bus sets off from Duyun to Libo. From Libo to Xiaoqikong, medium-sized buses and minibuses are available at the bus station; journey: half an hour; fare: six yuan. It costs two yuan to hire a



Tianshen Bridge of Daqikong, Lipo
(by Chian Yat Nin)



Shui Village of Sandu (by Wang Wanmin)

taxi and one yuan for a pedicab in the county town. Or pay 200 yuan, and hire a minibus for a day.

Accommodation:

Star-rated hotels and reception houses are available in the county seat of Libo.

Wangjiang Guesthouse: 25 yuan/person for a twin room; Zhangjiang Tower: 30 yuan/person for a room for three; Yangguang Hotel: 168 yuan/standard room.

As the Xiaoqikong Scenic Zone is far from the county town, you are advised to stay there for the night. Cuigu Villa, close to the river forest and with good facilities: 220 yuan/standard room; Xiaoqikong Guesthouse, at the entrance, near the Xiaoqikong Bridge, with excellent environment but ordinary facilities: 25 yuan/person for a twin room.

Entry ticket:

Daqikong: 30 yuan/person;
Xiaoqikong: 55 yuan/person;
Yuanyang (Mandarin Duck) Lake: 13 yuan/person;
Tianzhong (Heavenly Bell) Cave: 20 yuan;
Ethnic Yaoshan performance: 1,000 yuan/show;
Shuichun River drifting: 170 yuan/person, including insurance, land transport and round boat tour.

Local delicacies: Libo is one of China's sanitary model counties. The local cuisine features barbecued chicken, beef, mutton, fish and prawns. You can barbecue your own choices at reasonable prices.

Sandu

Sandu is 85 km from Duyun and there is a bus going between the two towns every half hour; journey, two-and-a-half hours; fare, 17 yuan. From Libo to Sandu, a passenger bus sets off every hour; journey, three hours; fare, 20 yuan. Bangao Village in Sandong Township is 30 km from the county town and it takes an hour and six yuan to reach.

Local delicacies: Food baked on an iron plate and fish cooked with sour soup, both in Shui style.

Accommodation:

Sandu County Government Reception House: 48 yuan/twin room.

There is no reception house in Bangao Village, but you can stay in a farmer's house for 30 yuan a day to include a bed and three meals. Most of the villagers are willing to take tourists.

Itineraries:

Day 1: Arrive in Guiyang and visit the city's landmark, Jiaxiu Tower; stay in Guiyang for the night.

Day 2: Take a long-distance bus to Libo at Guiyang Tiyuguan Long-distance Bus Station. Tour Xiaoqikong Scenic Zone in the afternoon and stay there for the night.

Day 3: Visit Yao villages in Yaoshan Township and the Daqikong Scenic Zone in the morning; return to the county seat for drifting on Zhangjiang River in the afternoon, which may take about three hours. Please remember to put your camera and valuable articles in the plastic bag provided by the company, so that they don't get wet or fall into the river. Stay in town for the night.

Day 4: Go to Sandu Shui Autonomous County and visit the Shui Ethnic Group Museum after arrival. Go to Bangao Village in Sandong Township in the afternoon to visit villages of the Shui people, watch the Duan Festival Bronze Dance, a demonstration of the Shui people's ancestor-worshipping ceremony and their handicraft making. You will also have a taste of the Shui food. (Please make arrangements ahead of schedule on 854-3921592.) You'd better hire a vehicle if you want to go back to the county town in the evening.

Day 5: Return to Guiyang and end the tour.

FOCUS ON XINJIANG

On the vast land of Xinjiang in Northwest China, there are mountains, basins, deserts and lakes, all providing tourists with numerous attractions — ruins of ancient cities and tombs along the Silk Road; Turpan, an oasis in the desert; Kanas Lake, a gem embedded in the Altay Mountains; Bayanbulak, the Swan Lake; and the world's second largest desert, the Taklimakan. The minority ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, such as the Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian, Uzbek, Tajik, Xibe, Kirgiz and Tatar, all have their own unique and colourful culture.



FOCUS ON SHAANXI

Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties. This has left Shaanxi a rich legacy of historical sites and cultural relics. In the provincial capital Xi'an, there is the fascinating terracotta army unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang; the tomb of Tang-dynasty Wu Zetian, China's first empress; and the stele forest. The province's beauty is capped with the sheer cliffs of Mount Huashan and the yellow earth of the Loess Plateau.



FOCUS ON YUNNAN

The mountainous wonderland of Yunnan enjoys a favourable warm climate all year round. Its capital, Kunming, sitting alongside Yunnan's largest lake, Dianchi, has the honourable name of "Spring City". The province is full of natural wonders and cultural relics, such as the Stone Forests, the Shangri-la, and the ancient cities of Dali and Lijiang. With over 20 diverse ethnic groups making up about one-third of the population, opportunities abound for you to see their characteristic cultures and customs.



The Call of China's West

FOCUS ON TIBET

The Tibet Autonomous Region of China is a land of mystery for tourists, a land of wonders for explorers, a land of purity for Buddhists, and the ultimate challenge for mountaineers. Its beautiful landscapes, unique geographical features and rich cultural legacy continue to attract an increasing number of visitors.

The countless attractions of Tibet make it impossible to include them all in one book. This photographic publication offers an introduction to some of the Region's most celebrated features: the Potala Palace and its precious collection of cultural relics; the Jokhang Temple with strings of worshippers prostrating themselves before it; the Shoton Festival and the Sunning of Buddha ceremony; the ruins of the mystical Guge Kingdom; and the amazing Qiangtang Grassland...

At the same time, *Focus on Tibet* outlines the six major routes to Tibet and the many stunning landscapes found along the way.



Paperback Only

FOCUS ON GUIZHOU

Guizhou is a land of splendid natural scenery. Its towering mountains and karst landforms team up with the gurgling rivers and magnificent waterfalls to form a wonderful work of Mother Nature. Huangguoshu Waterfalls and the limestone caves are the province's most frequented scenic spots. The 17 ethnic groups living in the picturesque province further colour the land with vivid customs and joyous festivals. It is its natural beauty and culture that make Guizhou a perfect travel destination.



FOCUS ON GUANGXI

Unusual topography has endowed the province with numerous spectacular karst formations — limestone caves, pinnacles and rocks. The most famous and enchanting scenic spot is Guilin, and the most travelled route, on the Lijiang River from Guilin to Yangshuo. The coastal city of Beihai has the country's largest beach, the Silver Beach. Other attractions include the diverse traditional customs of ethnic minorities, the Sino-Vietnamese border area, and the mysterious Huashan cliff paintings.



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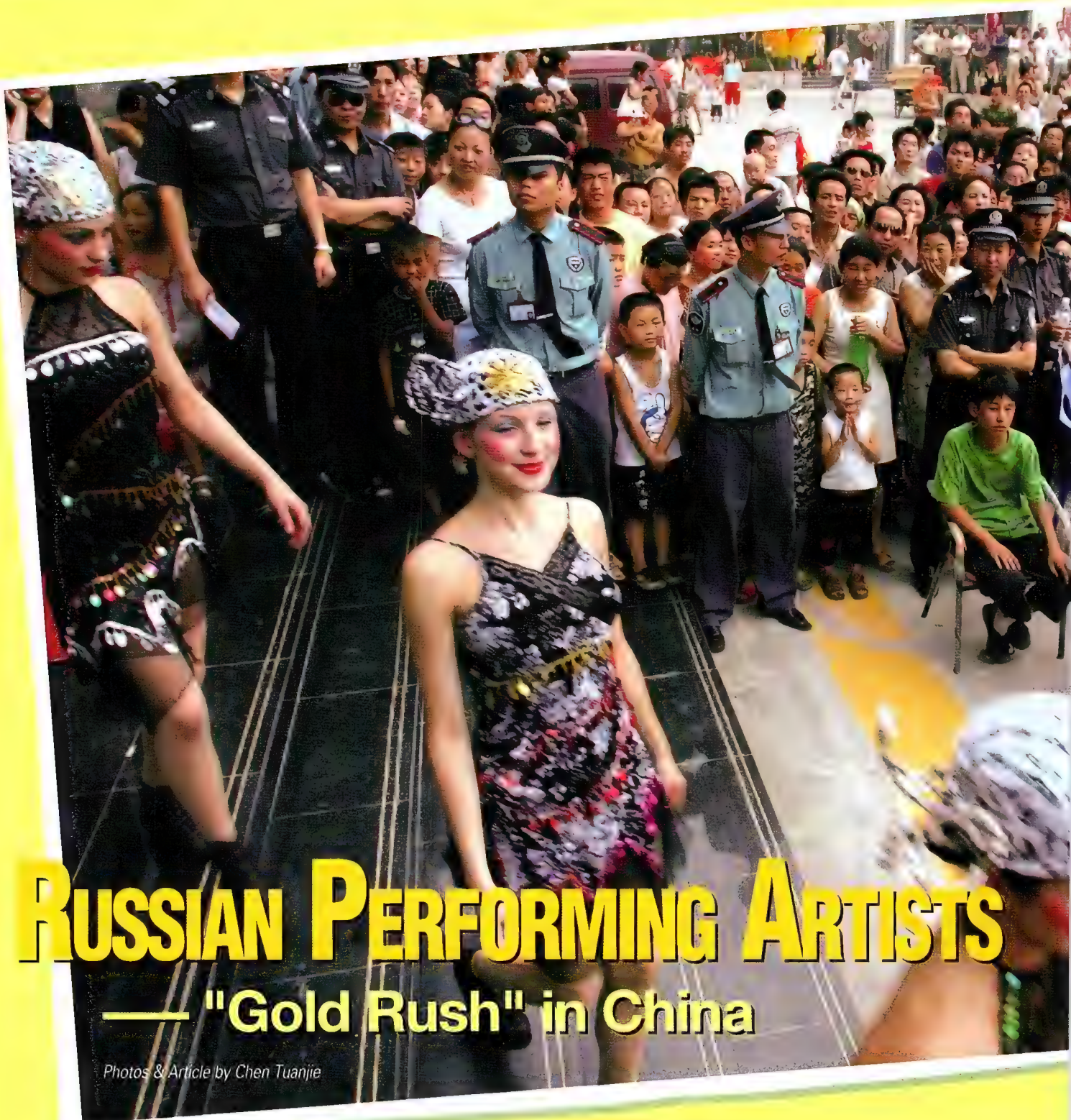
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RUSSIAN PERFORMING ARTISTS

— "Gold Rush" in China

Photos & Article by Chen Tuanjie

China's expanding and thriving economy has brought on a "Gold Rush Fever" in some neighbouring countries. Since 2000, performance troupes from Russia have been arriving in China to make their living in the performing arts. To cater to the taste of their Chinese audience, the performers even take the trouble to learn popular Chinese songs. Each performer can earn more than 3,000 yuan every month, which is much more than they can make back in Russia.



Due to Russia's economic downturn in recent years, Russian performers have embarked on performance tours, setting a new trend. Since the beginning of the 1990s, various Russian troupes have arrived in China in succession. The news of their success reached Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and other neighbouring countries, starting an imitation frenzy. Since 2001, many Russian performance troupes have arrived in Xi'an. I followed the performers as they went about their daily business — practice, performances, shopping, travelling — and experienced first-hand the little bits and pieces of their lives. The heart-warming moments, as well as the heart-wrenching moments all left a deep impression.

Singing Chinese Pop Songs

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in a downturn in Russia's economy. Russian rubles depreciated at an alarming rate. Once more valuable than the US dollar, rubles have become worthless — rubles are now worth only a third of the Chinese yuan. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Russian performers have arrived in China in bulk, hoping to make a living. The ancient capital Xi'an of Shaanxi Province, being a bridgehead in the economic development of Western China, became an important stop in their gold rush expedition.

The 27-member Russia Modern Song and Dance Troupe is the largest performance troupe to arrive in Xi'an in recent years. They travelled all the way from Qinghai to Xi'an by bus — an arduous 12-hour journey. On arrival, they took a short rest before adjourning to the practice hall for their rehearsal. That same night,



1. The audience are captivated the moment the Russian performers appear on stage.
2. Having to rush to as many as eight performance venues a night, the performers take the chance to catch some rest during free time.



they made their debut performance at Xi'an's Holiday Modern Nightclub Theater. Their excellent dance performance, sense of humor and perfect vocals captivated the audience and won a big round of applause. Klasha also belted out popular Chinese songs such as "The Jasmine", "Really Miss You" and "Today's Your Birthday China", raising the atmosphere even higher. Moved by the foreigners' splendid singing performance in Putonghua, the audience applauded wildly and cheered, "Encore! Encore!" Klasha, overcome by the excitement, jumped down from the stage to sing and dance along with them.

Hailing from Professional Dance Schools

According to their troupe master, Oleja, the Russian Modern Song and Dance Troupe was formed in 1959. From the tender age of around five to eight years old, the performers start receiving professional training in song and



dance. Their main performers, like Natasha, Klasha, Bolia and Volle, have performed overseas in countries such as Germany, Italy, France, Japan and Korea. Natasha was even hailed as a classical ballet star by the French media.

Realising that China is a potential market after seeing other performance troupes flocking there, they started thinking of following suit. With support from their China agent, they formed a 27-member troupe and made their way to China. In mid March 2004, they embarked on their China performance tour and have since given close to 100 well-received performances in Guangzhou, Hainan, Sichuan, Ningxia and other parts of China. To cater to their audience's taste, they often have to review their program to make improvements. Besides having the traditional Russian folk dances and acrobatics, they have included the Brazilian Samba and the Egyptian Mask Dance in their program. Sometimes, they also perform modern dances in sexy and



revealing costumes.

Madam Cao Lanhong, an agent for Russian performers for many years, commented, "the standards of the Russian performance troupes that come to China vary greatly. The performers with higher standards have mostly gone through years of training in Russia's professional dance schools and have a positive work attitude. They always put in their very best in their performance no matter how difficult the act may be. According to incomplete statistics, there are more than 10 Russian performance troupes arriving in Xi'an every year. They just come and go."

"These performance troupes with as little as three members will simply give themselves a modern-sounding troupe name and then proceed with their performances. Some nights, they have as many as eight performances and would be so busy rushing to the different venues that they do not even find time to take a short break. The largest performance troupe has more than 30 members so they can fill the night with their songs, dances, acrobatics and magic performances. The Russian performers are very good at capturing the audience's heart and have attracted more people to come and watch their performances. The entertainment club owners are very pleased with the performers as they have brought them more business."

"Our monthly earnings can vary from 3,000 to 5,000 yuan. It is so much higher than what we can earn in Russia", enthused Natasha, 30, a member of the Russian Modern Song and Dance Troupe.

Like a Superstar!

"When we were performing in Shanghai in autumn 1999, the response from the audience was great. They were so passionate. Affected by their enthusiasm, I jumped off the stage to join them. Suddenly, a drunk member of the audience rushed towards me and started being very touchy. That was the first time anything like that has happened to me so I was really at a loss for what to do. Fortunately, a senior member came to my rescue just in time.



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Otherwise, I really had no idea how to get myself out of the situation! After that, I've learnt how to deal with these drunkards whenever I meet them again. See, it's not easy making a living in the performing arts!" Liana started performing in China when she was 18 years old. She has been in China for six years and speaks Mandarin fluently. If not for her blonde hair, she could definitely be mistaken for a Chinese Xinjiang girl!

She was filled with emotion when she related her life as a wandering performer. "Of course, there are also times when the audience clamoured for our autographs. These are the moments that make us really feel like superstars! I remember that a lot of people requested our autographs when we were performing in Xi'an in July. The most touching moment for me was when a Chinese lad who looked around 25 years old came backstage, requested that I autograph the white shirt he was wearing and then promptly passed me a pen. Seeing the earnest look on his face, how could I refuse? So I signed my name and wrote the date carefully on his back. He then carefully removed his shirt and left the backstage topless, with my colleagues looking on enviously! I was teased mercilessly by them, 'He is going to keep your precious autograph for life! Has he fallen for you?'" In fact, Liana also hopes to find herself a

suitable partner soon so that she can end her wandering life.

Curing Homesickness

Although they may just be travelling performers, they are actually very professional and take their work very seriously. One hot sweltering afternoon, they arrived at a makeshift stage at the Mingzhu Furniture Mall. To ensure

1. The Russian performance troupe's popular and dazzling show.
2. The performers like to shop during their free time — this watch was also bought in China
3. Fans clamouring for autographs
4. The excellent dance performances and beautiful voices leave behind a legacy at many entertainment clubs.
5. Neatly-dressed and fully-prepared to go on stage.



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that their show is a success, the performers and acrobats put in a lot of effort during their rehearsal. By 4:30 p.m., the venue was already

packed with spectators who had come especially for their performance, even though the sun was scorching hot. This was one of the occasional times when they get to perform at an open-air stage. The performers were elated to see so many spectators and tried to perform their best in order not to disappoint their audience. At 5 p.m., the show finally started and Ksiusha was the first to perform. Her heart-warming rendition of the classic Russian song "Katiusha" tugged the heartstrings of their Xi'an audience and her second song "I Love you China" further enchanted them. Unfortunately at around 5.40 p.m., the sky suddenly darkened with grey clouds, soon followed by strong wind and heavy rain. The audience quickly made a dash for the nearest shelter but was still totally drenched by the sudden downpour. Vona braved the rain and continued with her performance. The show was only cancelled when the last member of the audience was out of sight. The next afternoon, they gave another free performance for the audience.

The oldest member of the troupe, 46 year-old Klasha, is a first-class performer back in Russia who specialises in folk songs. The youngest member, four year-old Alina, is the troupe master's daughter. She has been following her parents, wandering from place to place, since she was born — the theatre is her home. Having spent all her life with adults and not having playmates of her own age, a child would inevitably feel lonely at times. During the interview, I brought along my six year-old daughter. Alina and my daughter played together as if they had known each other for years. Even though they do not understand each other's language and have different skin colour, they were very engrossed in their games. My daughter even brought over some toys and sweets especially for Alina when we went again the next day. When it was finally time to say goodbye, there were even tears in their eyes!

As the Chinese saying goes, "One who lives alone in a foreign land will miss his family much more during festivals". There is no exception for the Russian performers in China. "When we are busy with our practices and performances, we basically do not have time to miss home. However, during times when we are free, we are overwhelmed with a strong sense of longing for home. We then occupy ourselves by chatting with friends or playing poker to try to get our minds off it. Only when we really can't stop thinking, then we make an international long distance call back home. But it's so expensive! Initially, the rate was eight yuan per minute. Now it's



much cheaper, only 3.20 per minute!" lamented Marsha, 12, an acrobat in the troupe. Not being able to adapt to the different lifestyle, language barrier, homesickness — these are the common problems faced by many travelling Russian performers.

No Compromising on Chinese Food

The Russians lead a very frugal life. When their costumes are torn, they mend it themselves; when their props are damaged, they repair them themselves. For the performers' meals, most agents arrange Chinese food. However, most first-timers in China are unable to adapt to the food in Xi'an, such as the noodles, dumplings, mutton soup, and Sichuan or Cantonese dishes, so they would rather eat at fast food restaurants like MacDonald's and Kentucky. One fine day in July 2004, an exhausted Liana who had not had a good break for several days went to the MacDonald's at the southeast corner of the Xi'an Bell Tower with three of her good friends to give themselves a good treat. Each of them ordered two sets of fried chicken drumsticks, one beefsteak set, a hamburger, a coke and then tucked in heartily. There was, however, a tinge of regret after the binging session. "I hope I don't gain three pounds all at once!" said Liana.



winter, the weather was extremely cold and so was the live performance market. We did not have any performances for over a month. All 12 members of the Russia Classical Song and Dance Troupe, including our translator, stayed indoors at our guesthouse most of the time. No one was in the mood for practice, not to mention performing. If we still couldn't find work, our remaining living allowance would very soon be used up. It was such anguish! Seeing the looks on the rest of our members' faces, I decided that we must not continue to sit and do nothing. So I quickly contacted some venues and managed to secure a few shows at lower fees. After the shows, we waited for another half a month but still couldn't find any work. Under such circumstances, we had

1. Despite the language barrier, the two children bonded.
2. The audience grooved along to the performer's dance beat.
3. The trendily dressed Russian performers become the centre of attention.
4. Used to the lifestyle in China after months of performance tours, using chopsticks poses no problem.
5. Sampling Shaanxi's "Chinese Hamburger" — Minced Pork Sandwich.



Certainly, there are also many performers who have gotten used to the lifestyle after years of staying in China. Using the chopsticks, eating noodles, speaking a bit of Mandarin, spending Chinese dollars — all these have become a part of their lives. Other than the language barrier, they already see themselves as Xi'an locals. Some have even learnt to speak a few local Shannxi dialect phrases like "Liao Zha Lie!" which means "very good". Sounds pretty authentic too.

"The periods when we have no shows are the most worrying times. The troupe master, the agent and the performers all get really worried. I remember when we came to Xi'an in 2002 during





no choice but to move on to Chongqing," said 32 year-old Marlina, who still remembers vividly details of that unfortunate Xi'an trip. Of their current trip to Xi'an, she said, "this time round, all our shows are arranged beforehand. Our schedule is packed."

Paydays and Birthdays are Their Favourite Days

As most of their shows are performed at nightclubs and entertainment clubs, they are often busy at night. A typical workday starts at 5 p.m. and ends at 2 a.m., shuttling from one venue to another. After work, they have a quick supper before retiring for the night. As their bedtime is late, their wake-up time is also late — their day starts at noon. After a quick breakfast, they start their rehearsal. During days when there are shows, the performers rarely have time of their own. During their leisure time, they arrange with other troupe members for shopping trips at East Street or Shuyuanmen.

After leaving the Empress Hotel where they are staying, they take a cab to East Street. "That cab driver was so horrible. He purposely made a big detour to earn an extra 10 yuan from us," Natasha kept on muttering to herself, feeling that the extra five yuan she spent was totally unjustified. Although people there are used to seeing foreigners in Xi'an, the sight of four beautiful female foreigners talking animatedly along the streets of the ancient capital is still a sight to behold. They went into almost every shop — boutiques, camera, and VCD shops — from East Street to Bell Tower. Klaroyava always tries on clothes whenever she steps into a boutique, keeping the shop assistants very busy taking her measurements. Natasha, on the other hand, only window shops and doesn't try on the clothes. However, at one of the camera shops, she finally set her eyes on a camera that cost 400 yuan. She made her purchase, bought the

film and asked Klaroyava to take a picture of her at the Xi'an Bell Tower to keep as a souvenir.

At Shuyuanmen, a shopping area with an architecture style of the Ming and Qing dynasties, the girls were dazzled by rows upon rows of stores selling everything from handcrafts and calligraphy to ancient books and jade. Seeing the terracotta figurines strewn all over the place, the girls cried in alarm, "How terrible!" It was only after I explained to them that they were only terracotta replicas that they realised their blunder.

"Xi'an is a wonderful place! Very beautiful!" exclaimed 14 year - old Ksiusha, a singer in the troupe, in stiff Putonghua, at the same time pointing to the big advertising TV screen near the Bell Tower and then said, "We don't have this in Russia!"

The Russian performers have two favourite days — the 15th of each month and the birthdays of troupe members. The 15th of each month is their payday. On this day, the elated performers buy small little gifts for each other or enjoy a meal together at fast food restaurants. And whenever it's a troupe member's birthday, everyone gathers together to sing the Russian birthday song and eat birthday cake. When the birthday celebration is over, everyone has cream smeared all over the face.

Building a Bond through the Difficult Times

Every troupe is a unique family of its own. In this big family, you will find married couples, mother and daughter pairs, small families, as well as courting couples. Bapuleo, a 42 year-old acrobat, and Alyoris, a 35 year-old singer, both from the Russian Royal Song and Dance Troupe, have an adorable 6 year-old daughter, Anna. As the couple travel all year round for their shows and do not have a fixed home, Anna has to follow them around. When they are performing on stage, Anna studies



by herself backstage. "Sometimes our shows end late at around 2 a. m. Anna will be fast asleep in the changing room by then. It's heartbreaking," said the couple. Anna is currently neither receiving training in performing arts nor attending school, which troubles the couple. They hope to provide their child a stable lifestyle and proper education eventually.

Ksiusha, a very attractive



14 year-old girl, has been performing in the Navy Song and Dance Troupe with her mother since she was eight years old. She has a good sense of rhythm and an excellent stage presence that makes her the star she is

1. The performers love to shop during their free time. The shop assistant is taking measurements.
2. Mamafe loves to dance. Becoming a ballet teacher after marrying her Chinese agent, she passed her "ballet dreams" on to the Chinese children.
3. The performers are interested and curious about the ancient "Shuan Ma Zhuang".
4. They love the ethnic root carvings.
5. They travel by bus throughout China.

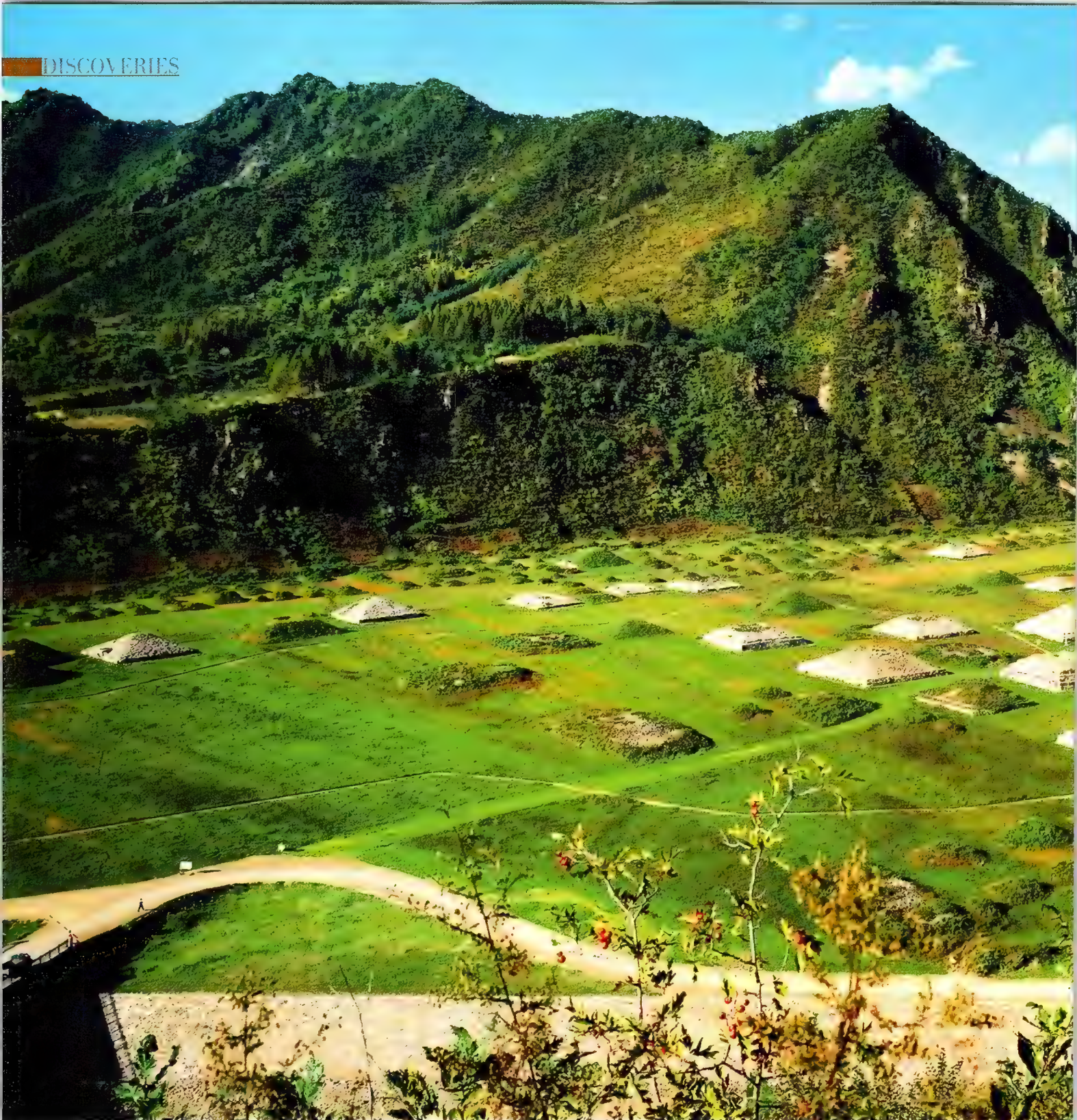
today! With her good looks and exposure to the stage at such a tender age, Ksiusha's mother is very protective towards her daughter, as she knows how complicated life in show business can be. She usually does not allow Ksiusha to go out alone.

Anderl and Natasha, a courting couple, are very much in love. Instead of going Dutch, Anderl will always offer to pay for Natasha's purchases. As Natasha loves to sing, being a singer herself, Anderl bought her a Walkman from the Xi'an Tangcheng Department Store. At times, I saw them both listening to the local Shaanxi "Xin Tian You", fully absorbed in the sounds of the foreign land. Due to the long travelling and the common lifestyle, strong friendships have developed between the performers.

Finally, the performance troupe completed their last performance after staying here for more than 10 days. The performers packed their bags and prepared to leave Xi'an in their chartered bus. Their bags are now filled with souvenirs and items they have bought in Xi'an. Leaving the ancient capital, their next stop is Henan, Shantong. To them, this is just the beginning of another adventure. An endless journey in search of gold.

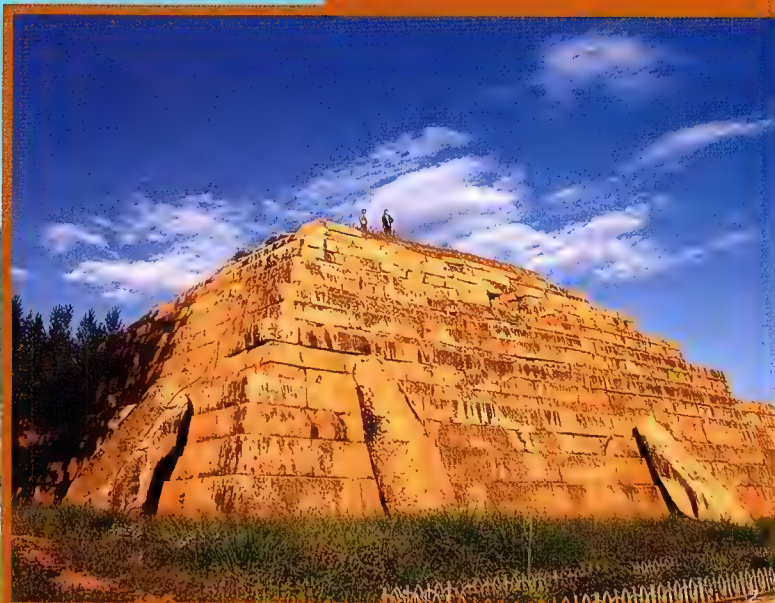
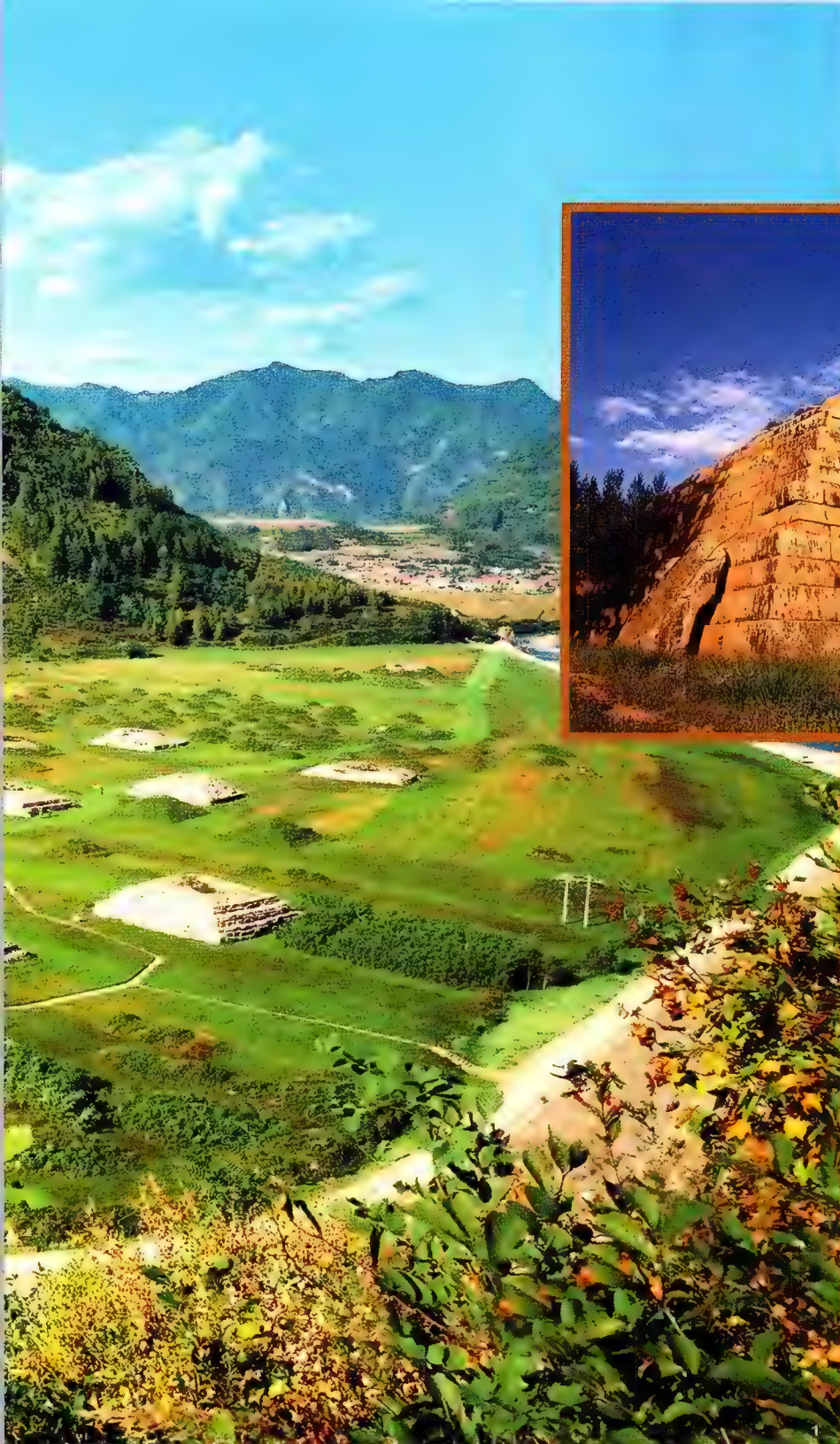


Translated by Roy Chew



Enigmatic Traces of the Ancient **Koguryo Kingdom**

Photos by Su Nan Article by Chan Yat Nin



A rare chance 13 years ago brought me to Ji'an in Jilin Province. By then I had begun to learn that there was a kind of indescribable sublimity about this small border town. It served as the capital of the Koguryo Kingdom for 129 years, with 49 dynasties setting their royal courts here. But for many reasons, its history was not noticed until the 1980s, when suddenly the ancient sites scattered around the wasteland became national treasures.

As a guest, I was treated courteously and was shown to almost all the Koguryo sites. However, since I was also considered an outsider, so my reporting was confined in scope. Some local friends informed me in private that because the terms Koguryo and Korea, which stand for two different countries and nations, were mixed up by some people,

The Koguryo Kingdom that existed in China for 700 years has been buried in the vast desert of the years for 1,300 years.

In July 2004, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee inscribed the historical sites and relics of the ancient Koguryo Kingdom on the World Heritage List as a world cultural heritage site, so once again the Koguryo history and culture has surfaced.

1. There are 75 groups of Koguryo tombs around Ji'an among with over 10,000 tombs found at Donggou. This is a Donggou graveyard of the nobles at the foot of the mountain.

2. The General's Tomb is one of the Koguryo kings' mausoleums. Having a similar appearance as the mausoleum of an ancient Egyptian Pharaoh, it is referred to as the "Oriental Pyramid".
(by Chan Yat Nin)

hence the historical and cultural relics related to the Koguryo Kingdom were not allowed to be publicised without permission.

The subtleties stimulated my inquisitive nature, and all the sites, cultural relics and the historical legend were deeply imprinted in my mind.

It was wonderful to see the ancient Koguryo city, also known as Guonei City, in the city proper of Ji'an. Its crumbling city wall is broken, but the stones are still intact. The original city wall was rectangular, stretching for between 550 m to 715 m a side. Built completely of stone, the wall was over four metres high and 7-10 m wide at its base, and now what remains stands 11 tiers high. Neither impressive-looking nor practical, these stone walls luckily escaped the fate of being dismantled and used as building material.

Guonei City was the second capital of Koguryo at the height of its power and splendour. At that time, the capital of Koguryo consisted of two cities: one was built in the plain where the king of Koguryo lived, and the other was on a mountain used mainly for military defence. In times of peace, the Koguryo King lived in the city in the plain, while during wartime he would retreat to the citadel on the mountain. Such a compound city shows the high military sophistication attained during the Koguryo Kingdom.

The mountain cities are representative of the Koguryo culture. According to research, there are at least 190 mountain cities in the Koguryo Kingdom, of which 80 are located in Liaoning Province, 60 in Jilin Province and another 50 in North Korea. I have been to the Wunu Mountain City, the first capital of the Koguryo Kingdom, also known as Heshenggu City. There are many archaeological remains of the Koguryo Kingdom, but I wasn't able to survey them all because they are too remote to reach.

✿ The Koguryo Kingdom Legend ✿

I was deeply impressed by the huge stone "Stele to King Haotai" standing upright four kilometres east of the city. The stele is a whole 6.4-m-high unpolished square column. The stele records the merits of the 19th Koguryo king—Guangkaitujing Ping'an Haotai—in his successful expeditions as well as the origins and establishment of the Koguryo Kingdom. On the four sides of the stele are carved 1,775 Chinese characters, in a style between the official and the regular calligraphies. The stele is a rare masterpiece of the art of tablet carving by itself, and it is also a precious resource for the study of the formation and development of the Koguryo regime during the Han (206 BC-AD 220) and Wei (220-265) dynasties.





❀ Legendary Koguryo History and Origins ❀

In ancient times at the turn of the Shang and Zhou dynasties about 3,000 years ago, a descendant of the Shang royal family, Qizi, led his people to move eastward and established a regime which was still subjugated to the Zhou ruler in today's Korean Peninsular. This regime was called by historians Qizi Korea. During the early years of the Western Han (206 BC-AD 25) Dynasty, Wei Man of the State of Yan escaped from war turmoil and came to Korea. United



1. Exquisite wall paintings can be found in Koguryo imperial and noble tombs. These are song and dance paintings and caisson ceiling paintings on the southern wall in the tomb with dancing figurines.
2. The "Stele to King Haotai", or Koguryo King Guangkaitujing Ping'an Haotai, was erected by the 20th king Changshou to record the merit of his father, Great King Yongle. The characters carved on the stele are precious historical materials for the study of the Koguryo culture. (by Chan Yat Nin)
3. The Southern barbian entrance to Wandu Mountain City, which, as citadel of Guonei City, was also the wartime capital of the Koguryo Kingdom.
4. When the Koguryo Kingdom moved its capital to Guonei City (now Ji'an City), the place was chosen as capital by 19 Koguryo kings since AD 3. This is the western part of the Guonei city wall. (by Lang Qi)
5. The Pavilion with the "Stele to King Haotai" and his Mausoleum face each other across a distance. (by Lang Qi)
6. The leading dancer on the southern wall in the tomb with dancer figurines.

with other people from the Central Plain, Wei Man usurped the power of Korea and still regarded the Han emperor as sovereign. This period is referred to in history as Wei Korea. Later, Wei Korea attempted to expand its territory, which invited many punitive expeditions from the Western Han regime. In 108 BC, the Han Dynasty conquered Wei Korea and set up four prefectures there and its vicinity—Lelang, Zhenfan, Lintun and Xuantu.

In 37 BC, people of the Fuyu ethnic group, who originally lived in northeastern China established a small local regime at Koguryo County in Xuantu Prefecture and named it Koguryo after the county.

At first the Koguryo regime was rather small and weak, so the Han Dynasty didn't take it seriously. After Wang Mang usurped the power of the Han Dynasty, he even degraded the king of Koguryo to a duke and drafted its army in the war against the Huns. Then the ensuing conflicts resulted in the death of the Koguryo duke. After the establishment of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), the

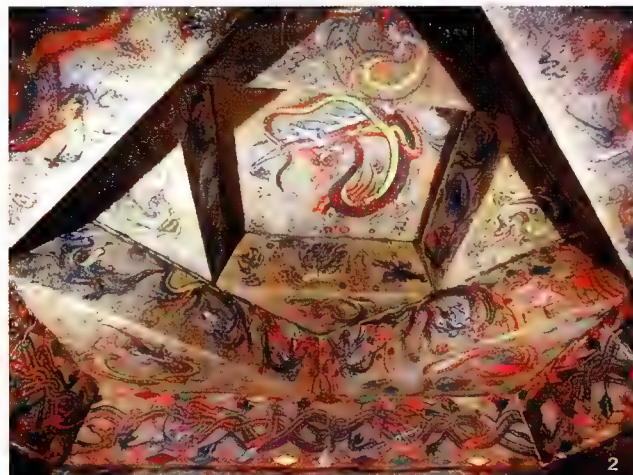
Koguryo Kingdom joined the war launched by the State of Western Jin (265-317) against the Murong Xianbei regime, and later made repeated invasions of Murong Xianbei. As the enmity between the two got deeper, the 40,000-strong Murong Xianbei army dashed into Wandu Mountain City and captured some 50,000 Koguryo people including the mother and wife of the Koguryo King Zhao.

The Koguryo Kingdom was thwarted from its westward expansion after two heavy blows and remained a subject to the regime in the Central Plains. Also, it had to guard against northern aggression from the Silla and Paekche regimes. In 427 AD, the Koguryo Kingdom moved its capital to Pyongyang and since then the Koguryo lived in peace. Its territory covered the central and northern part of the Korean Peninsular, its northern border extended to today's central Jilin Province, its western border to the Liaohe River, and the eastern border to Yanji in Jilin Province, thus becoming a strong nation in northeast Asia that stretched 1,000 km from east to west, and 500 km from north to south.



emperor restored the Koguryo king. By then, the Koguryo Kingdom had become strong while a civil strife was going on in the Central Plain during the later period of Wang Mang's regime. The ambitious Koguryo were preparing for expansion and had already annexed some small ethnic groups around.

In 244 AD, as the State of Wei was busy fighting the State of Shu and the State of Wu, the Koguryo launched an aggressive war against Liaodong Prefecture in the State of Wei, but were seriously defeated. In 246, the Wei army made an eastward expedition and the Koguryo capital—Wandu Mountain City—was ravaged. Yet the tenacious Koguryo soon regained their vigour and were always progressing in their westward expansion. In 319 the



1. Hunting scene depicted on the bottom left part of the northern wall in No. 1 Tomb at Changchuan.
2. The caisson ceiling painting in No. 4 Tomb at Wukuifen.
3. Mounted archers painted on the northern wall in the tomb with dancer figurines.
4. The complete view of the eastern wall of the front chamber in No. 1 Tomb at Changchuan.

The peaceful years lasted till the Tang Dynasty (618-907) when the Koguryo Kingdom defied the order of Tang Emperor Taizong to make peace with the Silla and Paekche regimes and staged a war against the Tang Dynasty that lasted for 20 years. Finally, it was conquered by the united force of the Tang Dynasty's eastward expedition army, and the Silla army. After the end of the Koguryo Kingdom, the Tang regime made most of its people move to the hinterland, while some Koguryo people integrated into the neighbouring ethnic groups. Thus the Koguryo Kingdom vanished in the long river of history.

✿ Brilliant Koguryo Civilisation ✿

But the past has not vanished like smoke. Although the kingdom is nowhere to be seen, relics of the Koguryo culture are still here. The most representative are the wall paintings in the tombs.

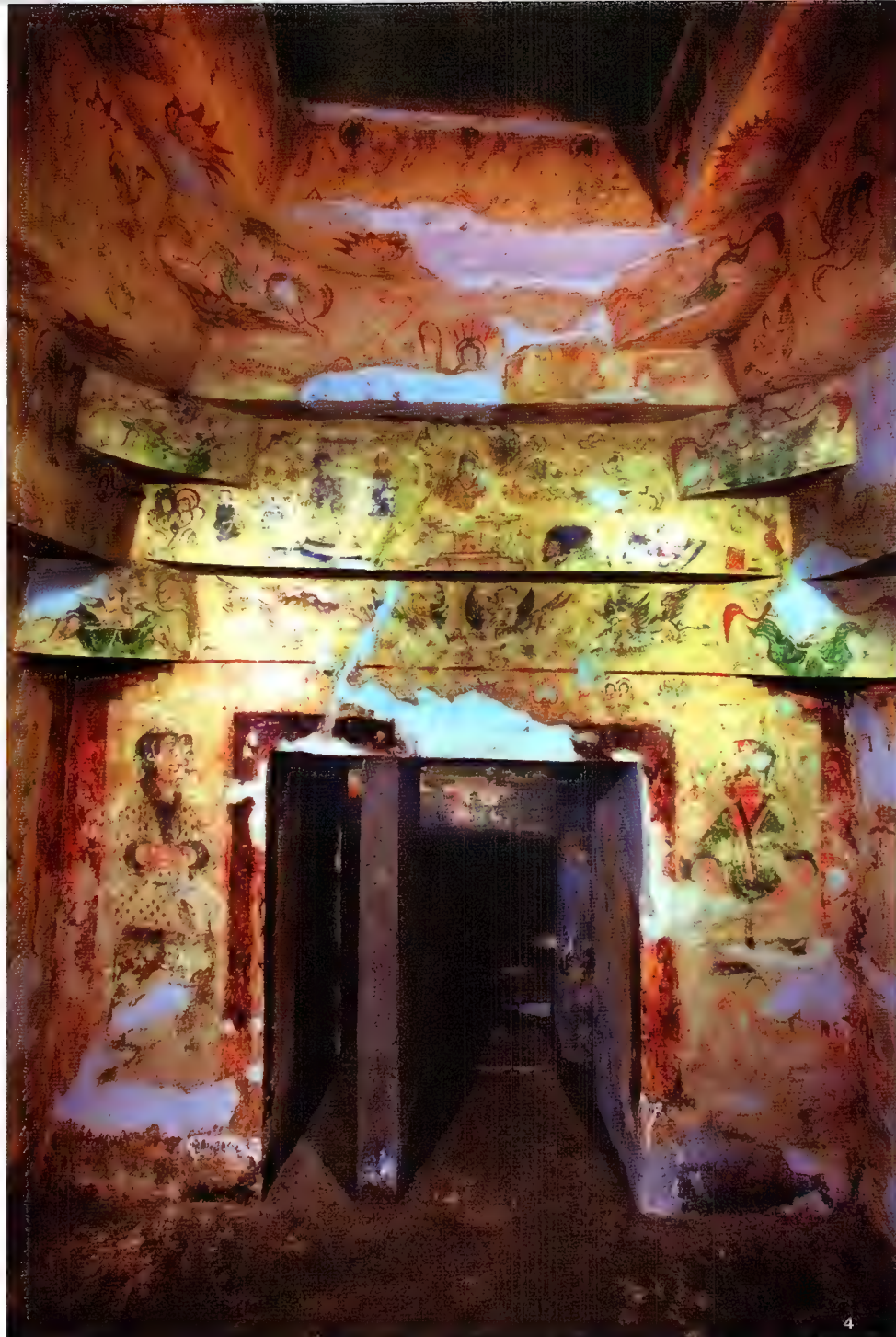
There are 75 groups of Koguryo tombs around the old Ji'an City. The densest concentration of some 10,000 tombs is found in the Donggou Plain at the foot of the Wandu Mountain. Tombs built in the kingdom's early period were mostly piled up with gravel. But those of the kings and nobles were rather large, and built by laying huge stones in the forms of square altars and setback type pyramids with well-structured stone chambers.

I came to the General's Tomb, as the locals call it. Actually this is the mausoleum of King Changshou, the 20th Koguryo king. The magnificent mausoleum was built with 1,100 huge granite slabs in a tapering square. Standing 12.4 m high, it consists of seven stairs, with the base covering an area of 997 m². Looking just like the mausoleum of the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh, it is referred to as the "Oriental Pyramid". I climbed to the fifth floor and saw in the chamber two stone beds for holding the coffin. As it was raided in the early years, the chamber has long been empty.

✿ The Wall Paintings of Wukuifen ✿

Wukuifen gets its name from a group of five tombs, probably of nobles, all shaped like generals' helmets. Upon entering the chambers and adjusting my eyesight to the inner light, I was stunned by what I saw. The wall paintings around me were amazingly bright and fresh after more than 1,000 years.

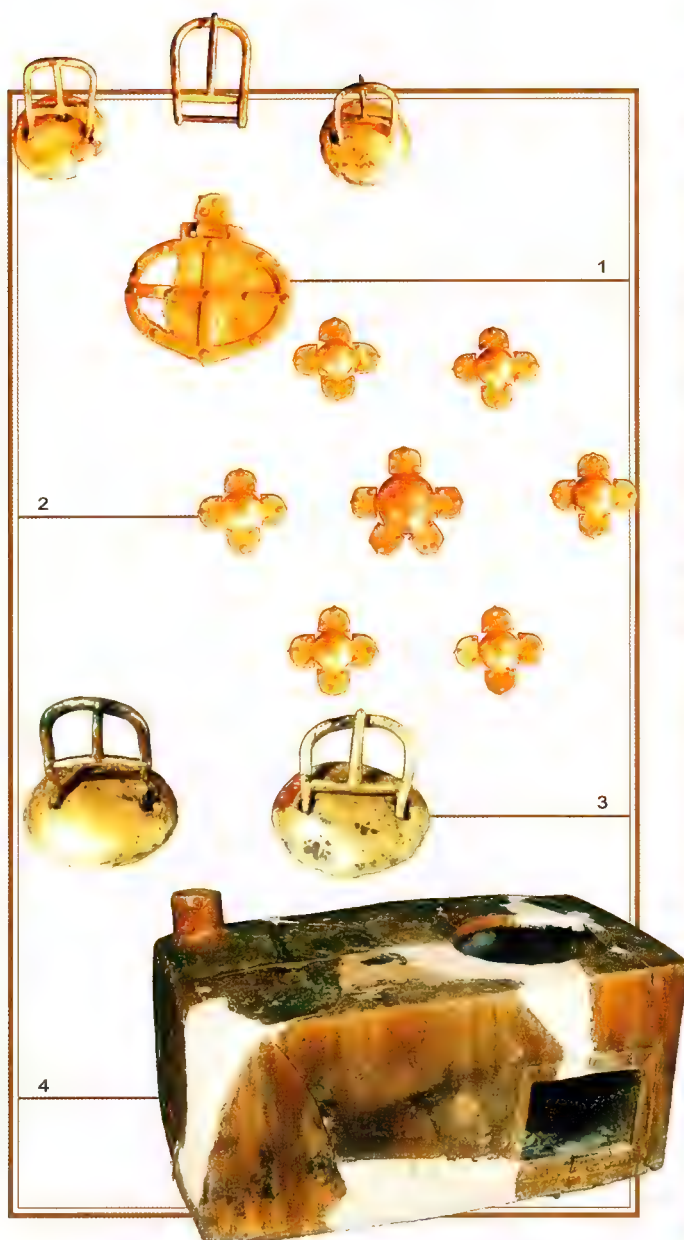
The wall paintings cover a rich variety of content, ranging from family life, banquet entertainment, theatrical



performance, deities, worship ceremony, hunting excursions, battles, to livestock breeding, as well as fairytales. Especially noticeable are repeated familiar sights, such as the Four Gods worshipped in Taoism: rose finch, Southern God; tortoise, God of the Northern sky; black dragon, the Orient God; and the white tiger, Taoist guardian

The Koguryo site includes archaeological remains of three cities and 40 tombs: Wunu Mountain City, Guonei City and Wandu Mountain City, 14 imperial tombs and 26 noble tombs. They all belong to the Koguryo culture, named after the dynasty that ruled over parts of northern China and the northern half of the Korean Peninsula from 37 BC to 668 AD. Guonei City, within the modern city of Ji'an, played the role of a supporting capital after the main Koguryo capital moved to Pyongyang.


— UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation)



spirit of the West. In addition, wall painting featuring the god of the sun Fuxi, (who taught people how to fish, hunt, and raise livestock) and Nuwa, Chinese goddess of the moon (who created human beings and patched up the sky), show the impact of the Central Plains culture on the Koguryo.

The unconstrained style and powerful imagination displayed in the wall paintings represents the spirit of the Koguryo people. After viewing paintings in several tombs, I was filled with admiration for the ancient artists.

❀ Postscript ❀

After a flash of 15 years, the Koguryo culture has again become a hot topic. Many of these sites have been enclosed so that people can no longer see the precious cultural remains of the vanished 700-year-history as freely as I could then. I felt very fortunate that I was able to come to Ji'an when the Koguryo relics were still freshly excavated. 

Translated by L. Yu

Koguryo, Korea and Li's Korea

Koguryo Originating from the Fuyu people, the Koguryo ethnic group were active from the 1st century BC to the 7th century AD in northeastern China. In 37 BC, the 2nd year in the Jianzao reign period of Emperor Yuandi during the Western Han Dynasty, the Koguryo established their regime at present-day Xinbin County, Liaoning Province, then shortly after, set their capital at Heshenggu City (Wunu Mountain City in present-day Huanren County in Liaoning Province). In AD 3 they moved their capital to Guonei City and Wandu Mountain City. Located then in the Koguryo County of Xuantu Prefecture during the Western Han Dynasty, the ducal regime was called Koguryo. History books used to refer to it as Korea. But as another regime set up at AD 918 on the Korean Peninsula was also called Korea, to differentiate the two, historians generally call the former as Gao's Korea because its king was named Gao, or Koguryo as it is called now, and the latter as Wang's Korea.

The Koguryo Regime was unified by the Tang Dynasty in 668. Its territory came under control of the Andong Protectorate of the Tang Dynasty. Most of the Koguryo people moved into the hinterland, and a small number were integrated into the neighbouring ethnic groups.

Korea (Wang's Korea) The Korean ethnic group consisted mostly of the Silla and Paekche people living on the central and southern parts of the Korean Peninsula, and some Koguryo people also joined them after the end of the Koguryo regime. Established in 918, Korea replaced another regime—Silla—in 935, and wiped out the State of Later Paekche the next year, thus unifying most of the area of the central and southern Korean Peninsula. Because its ruler was surnamed Wang, historians refer to the regime as Wang's Korea.

Li's Korea In 1392 Li Chenggui, a minister of Wang's Korea, deposed the king and usurped the throne. The next year Li presented a memorial to the Ming Dynasty emperor asking for a conferment. The Ming ruler conferred Li Chenggui as the King of Korea, then the regime was renamed Korea. In historical books it is called Li's Korea or Li's Dynasty. Later its land expanded to include today's Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Republic of Korea. Its people are today's Koreans.



1-4. Gilded trappings and glazed pottery stove unearthed from a Koguryo tomb. (by Gu Deping)

5. White tiger painting on the western wall in No. 4 Tomb at Wukuifen.



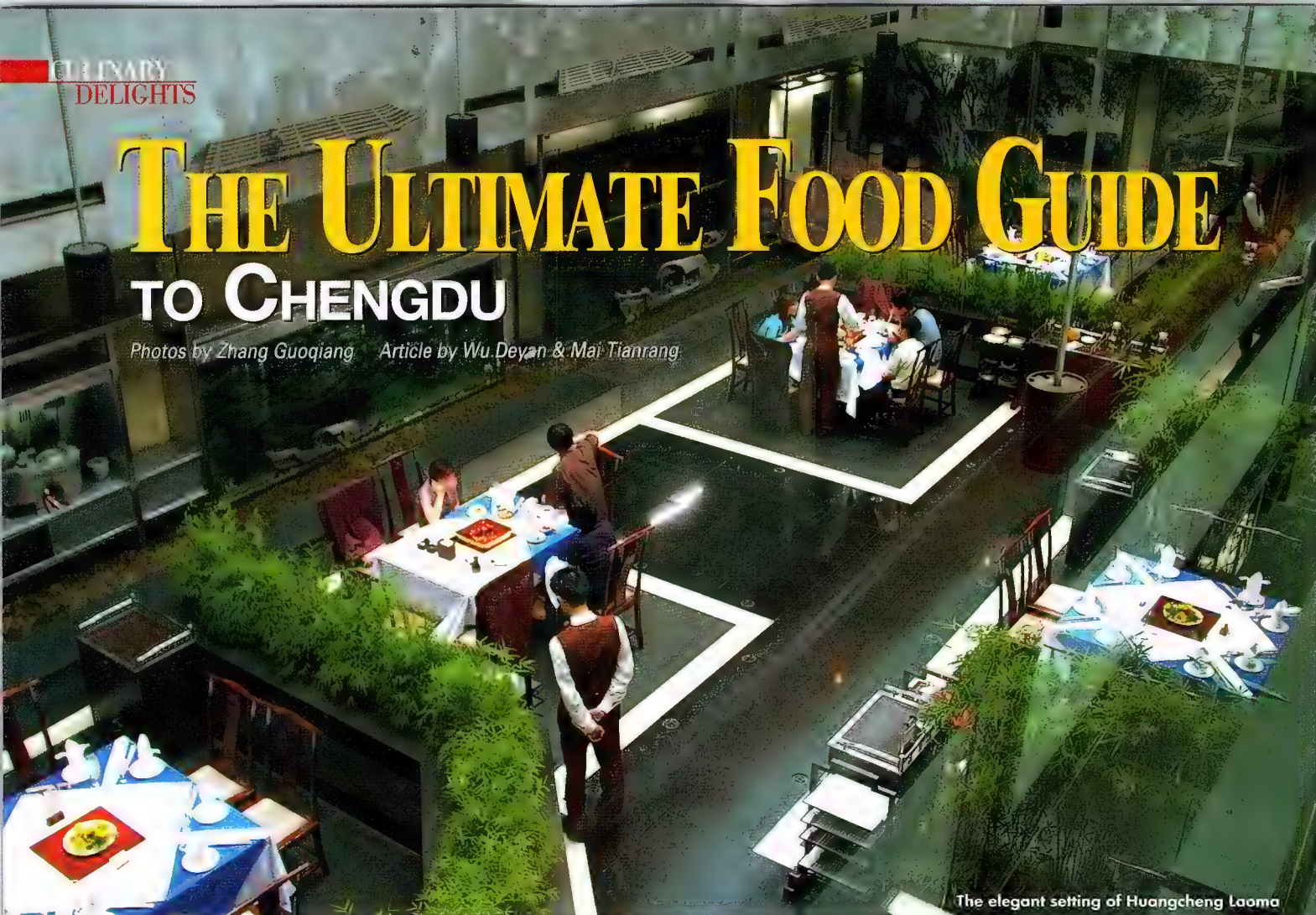
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THE ULTIMATE FOOD GUIDE TO CHENGDU

Photos by Zhang Guoqiang Article by Wu Deyan & Mai Tianrang



The elegant setting of Huangcheng Laoma



The map of Chengdu — the capital of Sichuan Province — is like a carefully designed and laid-out guide to local delicacies. From eateries featuring traditional snacks hidden in small lanes to grand feasts in luxurious restaurants, the food here will make your mouth water.

Here the culinary history can be traced to more than 2,000 years ago. During the Song Dynasty (960-1279), local cuisine branched out into different schools that created, it is said, more than 3,000 varieties of food!

Perhaps the geographic location of Chengdu, lying in a basin area that causes a damp climate for much of the year, is why Sichuan food uses such huge helpings of chillies and pepper, especially in Sichuan hotpot, to disperse the dampness. Strictly speaking, hotpot is not an indigenous creation of Chengdu, but it has quickly caught on, so quickly that it has become a unique culinary cultural phenomenon. Sichuan red and spicy hotpot soup is rich and aromatic in taste as it uses butter as one of the basic



Huiguorou (pork meat)
of Baguobuyi

ingredients. The white soup, which is rich but mild, is prepared from mushrooms, fish and animal bones.

Chengdu snacks are even more special, thanks to the great variety and long history. An incomplete account suggests more than 500 kinds, ranging from pastries to rice, a combination of vegetables and meat, as well as different kinds of grain, besides wheat and rice. The salty, sweet, peppery and spicy tastes are the four basic qualities. In addition, the extremely reasonable price help Chengdu snacks win the hearts of not only local residents but also tourists as well.

In the eastern section of Chengdu, Hongshacun is the centre of many mid to low-priced food courts featuring homely-style food; in the west, the area of Yangxi is home to more than one-third of the city's quality Sichuan-style restaurants; in the south, the area along Nanyan is the area for dozens of large tourist restaurants standing side-by-side; and in the lanes, eateries are too many to count.

HUANGCHENG LAOMA *Conveyor-Belt Hotpot Dishes*

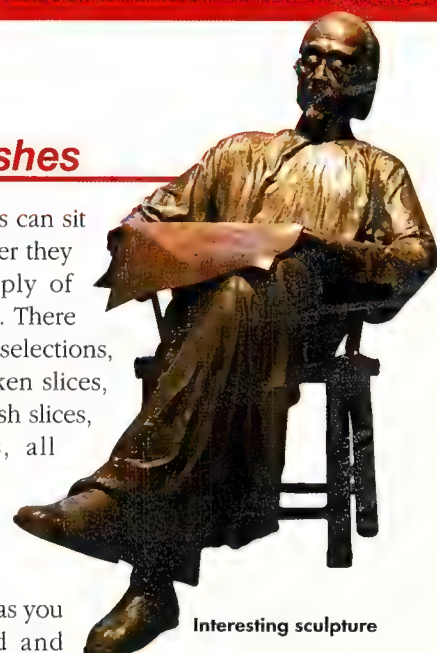
Stepping into Huangcheng Laoma (Old Lady Imperial City) Restaurant, you may be totally at a loss. You would find yourself enclosed in the bamboo grove, where is decorated with bas-relief sculptures of western Sichuan-style structures and models of old Chengdu city cased in a huge glass box, but you cannot see a single hotpot in sight. Wait till you get behind the screen and there your eyes will be greeted by a world of hotpot food.

The four-story restaurant is cleverly divided into nine eating sections of different design, and each section will lead you to think that the taste is different from the others, although the ingredients used in all nine sections are exactly the same.

The self-service section on the ground floor deserves special mention. In fact, buffet style hotpot restaurants are common in Chengdu, but having plates filled with hotpot food to go around a conveying belt of several hundred

metres long is unique. Diners can sit at the table and pick whatever they like from the endless supply of dishes that come on the belt. There are more than 100 different selections, ranging from beef and chicken slices, sectioned goose intestines, fish slices, bean curd to dumplings, all specially prepared according to the restaurant's secret recipes. The portions are small so that you have room to try as many varieties as you can. The quantity of food and reasonable price make the place a particularly favoured spot among young people.

This restaurant is also famous for its architectural style and interior design. The bas-relief sculpture on black bricks — a feature unique to western Sichuan — inlaid on the main structures, along with Ming and Qing style bas-relief works on windows, make the place very close to the life of old Chengdu as describe in legends. A great variety of sculptures portraying the local lifestyle and customs here give you the feeling of being in a folklore museum. No wonder clients to the restaurant invariably tour all the four floors with great interest.



Interesting sculpture



✉ 20 Nansanduan, Erhuan Road

🚌 Accessible by buses on route 52, 59, 61 and 103.

🕒 10:00-23:30

👉 Tender chicken slices, beef slices, mushrooms and local freshwater fish.

💰 40-100 yuan/person ☎ (028) 8513 9999

DATANGREN *Rabbit-Head Meat*



Stir-flying rabbit-head meat.

The 1,000-m² Datangren Restaurant attracts customers with its specially flavoured spicy hotpot of rabbit-head, fish hotpot and local Sichuan-style dishes.

According to the restaurant owner, unlike other restaurants, his chefs do not marinate method, but they stir-fry instead, making the dishes especially peppery, spicy and crispy. The meat is tender and succulent and it leaves a lingering good taste in the mouth.

Prepared from a recipe of 100 years old, it remains popular today. More than a million rabbit heads are said to be eaten at the restaurant each year, giving it the nickname "king of rabbit heads".



Rabbit-head meat

✉ 70 Shuangnanduan, Wuhou Avenue 🚌 Accessible by bus numbers 8, 53, 72 and 404.

🕒 9:00-24:00 👉 Rabbit-head meat, house bean curd, and stir-fried boiled pork in hot sauce.

💰 20-80 yuan/person ☎ (028) 8506 9338 / 8506 7628 / 8506 7638 (teahouse)



BAGUOBUYI *Representative of Eastern Sichuan*

"The Region of Ba produces strong liquor and men of poetry; common folk are nobler than dukes and marquises." The first two lines of Ode to the Restaurant written by Wei Minglun, a contemporary noted man of exceptional talent, link liquor with men of letters. This makes the restaurant Baguobuyi (Common Folks of the Region of Ba) sound very Sichuanese, for its ancient names was Ba. This restaurant really stands out with its rich eastern Sichuan folk features and creative dishes.

Eastern Sichuan refers to the hilly and mountainous regions of Bazhong, Daxian and part of today's Chongqing, a centrally administered municipality that enjoys the same administrative privileges as Sichuan Province. Once inside the restaurant, customers seem to have entered a farmer's courtyard in eastern Sichuan. A huge tree casts its shade on the second-floor deck. The decorations typical of eastern Sichuan houses remind customers of old style houses in the region. Curtains with small flower patterns, black and white pictures, big red lanterns, strings of red chilies and golden yellow corn ears hanging on the wall generate a boundless feeling of being at home.

The menu here mostly features homely food, including varieties of mushrooms, dried cowpeas, dried radishes, sour turnips and a host of fresh wild greens, particularly from the Simian, Jinpo and Daba mountains of Chongqing and Sichuan.

Throughout the year, you can enjoy dishes of different fresh vegetables, such as greens with preserved pork and stir-fried pea shoots in spring, cucumber with eels and

balsam pear soup in summer, fresh vegetables with fish in autumn, and shredded radishes with crab and garlic shoots with turnips in winter. Though very common ingredients, they are turned into delicious dishes thanks to the beautiful cooking of local chefs.

"Sour turnip and water chestnut with duck" is one of the favourite dishes. Sour turnip is a very common appetiser but when cooked together with water chestnut and duck over a low fire, the sour taste and freshness creates a uniquely charming aroma.

"Common folk chicken" is prepared with traditional pickles. The rich sour and spicy tastes and the tender texture of the meat reflect a unique harmony of traditional and modern tastes. Dried cowpea has always been a common ingredient for farmers. But when cooked together with pork, it acquires an entirely new taste.



Pork intestines stir-fried on three gorges rocks



Boiled chicken

✉ 20 Siduan, Renminnan Road.

🚏 Stop at the Art Gallery on bus routes 16 and 50.

🕒 10:00-23:30 🍽️ Bean curd stewed with carp, pork intestines stir-fried on Three Gorges rocks, steamed pork with rice, and pickled chili with chicken chop troy.

💰 30-80 yuan/person ☎ (028) 8557 3839



CHUANJIANG HAOZI *Hotpot in a Bar*

It is difficult to conclude whether it's the decorations at Chuanjiang Haozi (Labour Song on the Yangtze in Sichuan) Restaurant coincide with customers' aesthetic tastes, or its alternative dish names give diners special incentives, but this place is one of a kind. The interior design fully reflects the fads of modern times: bright red walls, leather tables and chairs, rough looking metal decorations here and there, chandeliers and the 18 ship-shaped "bachelor's passion hotpot" bars in the centre of the hall. If it were not for the boiling hotpot soup with its peppery and spicy smell, the restaurant with its hustle and bustle

atmosphere may well pass for a typical bar.

Speaking of sentiment and passion, if you sit on a high chair around one of the ship-shaped bars and enjoy a "bachelor's passion hotpot", you are in for a real treat. Since it is "bachelor's passion hotpot", naturally each diner has his or her own pot. If two people want to share a meal, you can order one pot with white (not spicy) soup and another pot with red (spicy) soup. Apart from hotpot with butter, the place also offers "lovers' hotpot" with vegetable oil, fresh green chilies and dried red chilies. According to the restaurant owner, the shiny red soup for the "lovers' hotpot" is made from frying freshly harvested green peppers and other peppers in sesame oil and vegetable oil along with several other ingredients. The peppery and spicy soup also boasts a refreshing aroma. The white soup is concocted according to a secret family recipe with chicken, duck, animal bones and fish along with sour turnip. It is exceptionally delicious.

Another unique feature of the restaurant is the cartoons on the wall. Cartoon figures named after dishes on the menu such as big-head fish in deep water, bamboo shoots on snowy mountains, natural mountain delicacy and preserved meat from Bashan naturally help such dishes to become house specialties.



✉ (Yulin Shop) 1 Huazi Road on Fangcao Street 🚌 Get off at the Fangcao Xijie Street bus stop for bus numbers 72, 77, 79, 93 and 114.

🕒 10:00-23:00 🍷 Big-head fish in deep water, bamboo shoots on snowy mountains, and preserved meat from Bashan.

💰 40 yuan/person ☎ (028) 8553 3111 / 8555 5636-800

XIANGPANZI *A Lovers' Nest?*

Perhaps it is in line with the tradition established by Sima Xiangru, a noted literary figure of the Han Dynasty, when he made a living by selling liquor. Many poets and writers in Chengdu also run restaurants and Xiangpanzi (Fragrant Plate) is one such place. Shi Guanghua, the owner, is a well-established poet and writer of Chengdu, whose recent book *My Life of Sichuan Cooking*, has helped spread his fame as a gourmet master.

The restaurant is not large but its disarming interior is a big attraction. An interesting decoration is a maxim hanging in the shop written by Shi. In the writing he recounts an ancient writer, named Xue Tao, who lived near here during the Tang Dynasty, and composed poems and created dozens of cold dishes to entertain his friends who were also men of letters. A

city where she lived. These writings pasted up on the restaurant's wall truly make this restaurant managed by a writer unique among Sichuan eateries.

The restaurant pursues perfection with every dish. The aroma, crispiness and the soothing effect in the mouth of the Zhiwei duck dish, the fresh, tender and spicy tastes of stir-fried freshwater prawns and the texture of the marinated duck web all leave an unforgettable taste.

Its special pickle is prepared to perfection too. Pickles are appetisers but their quality is also an indication of the quality of the restaurant. Why is this the case? Simply, in all restaurants in Chengdu, pickles are always served at all three meals every day. In the absence of really good cooking skill, the dish will just not have the right taste. ☑

Translated by F. Huang



Pickle



Crispy and hot chicken slice



bean curd dish that he created was named after him, and it remains a delicacy to go with wine even today.

According to the writing, Dong Xiaowan, a beauty in the distant Jiangsu Province of a later time, happened to obtain Xue Tao's

recipes with which she prepared delicacies and instantly attracted people in the

Marinated duck web



Stir-fly lobster



✉ 17B 8 Qingyang Street

🚌 Get off at Qingyang Palace bus stop on bus routes 11, 27 and 34.

🕒 10:00-22:00

🍷 Water jumping pickles, Zhiwei duck and marinated duck web.

💰 30 yuan/person ☎ (028) 8779 6826



THE EXPRESSIVE SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAINS

Photos and Article by Shui Xiaojie

In the past I always thought that only crazy people would want to climb snow-capped mountains. But when I actually came close to one of these towering summits, I was impressed by its holiness and dignity, and began to understand the lure felt by mountaineers.

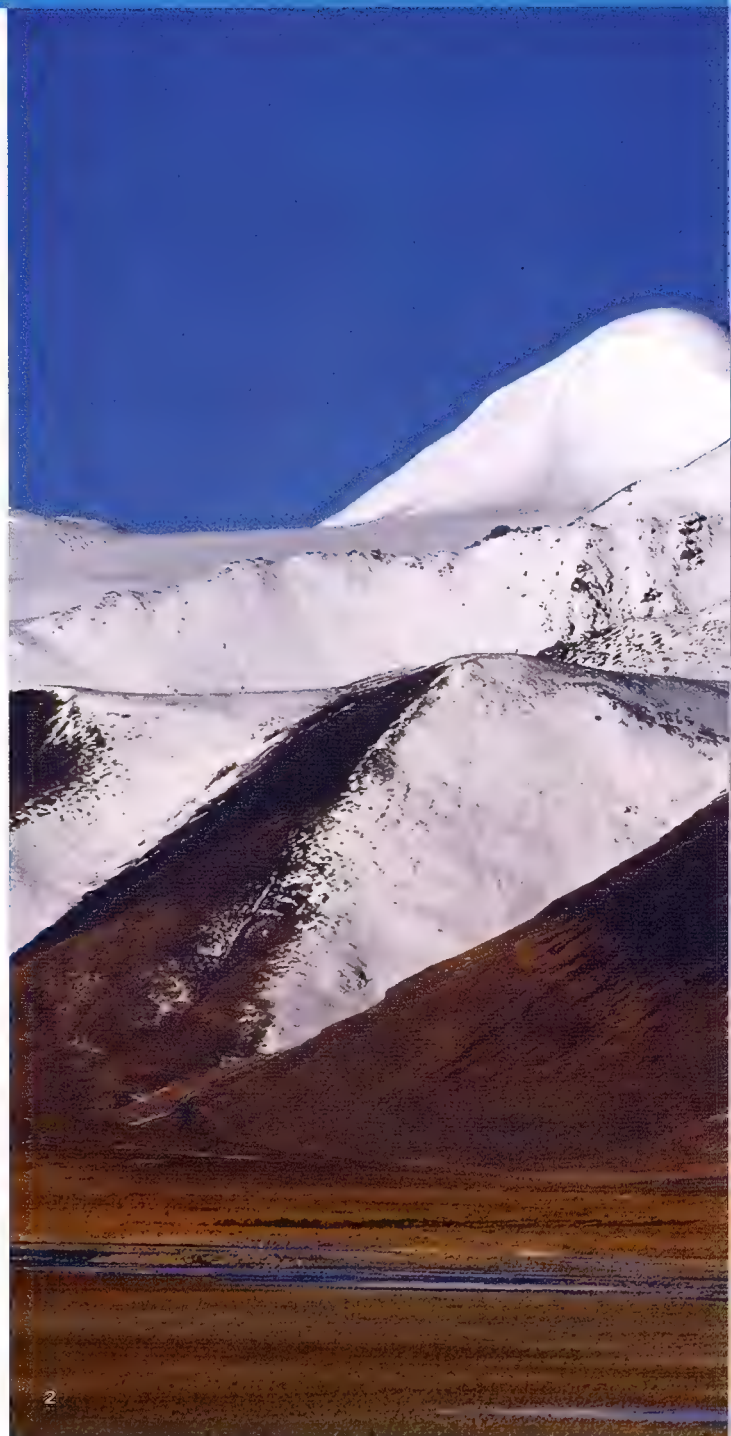
Only by throwing oneself into the embrace of the mountains can one learn their distinctive characters and expressions.

What is the highest point of earth? The answer is of course, the 8,848-m Mount Qomolangma (Mt. Everest) in the Himalayas. I learnt that when I was a child but forgot about it gradually while growing up.

The first time I saw high mountains covered with snow all year round was when I was in Kangba, a Tibetan district, at the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. I was very cold because the plateau was like a refrigerator, and I had a headache and felt stuffy and uncomfortable because of the shortage of oxygen at such a high altitude. I was haunted by the idea that altitude sickness was potentially fatal, so I was in no mood to enjoy the holiness of the scene.

Gazing on the Distant Snow-capped Mountain

The first mountain that impressed me was Mount Geladandong. You have to go through the Danggula



Mountain Pass at an elevation of more than 5,000 m to get to Lhasa on the Qinghai-Tibet Highway. Geladandong, at an elevation of 6,621 m at the west of the pass, is the main peak of the Danggula Mountains. The glacier at its foot is the source of the Yangtze River. A high monument with the inscriptions "Source of the Yangtze River" on the bank of the Tuotuo River is in fact still 300 km from Jianggudiru Glacier, the real source of the Yangtze River.

Since few people have entered the Mount Geladandong area, there were various rumors about it that made our blood freeze. In order to make preparations for our walk along the Yangtze River, we spent more than a year gathering information for our trip. But we were really terrified by what we learnt. It seems people cannot survive in these enchantingly beautiful places, because living conditions here are even worse



1. The people living in the snow-covered area of the Yarlung Zangbo River
2. The 6,621-m Geladandong Mountain is the highest peak of the Danggula Mountains.
3. A nameless snow-capped mountain in the deep gorge of the Yarlung Zangbo River at dawn
4. The pure white snow-capped mountain is under the threat of environmental pollution.

than the polar regions. This bleak and desolate mountainous area, with an elevation of more than 5,000 m and the highest Frigid Zone, is called the Earth's third pole. Its oxygen content is half less than that at sea level and the average temperature is below freezing. Generally speaking, people cannot live in an area with an elevation of 4,500 m or above. Hence, Geladandong area has long been known as a "no-man's land".

When we were in Xining that year, a reporter from Qinghai Daily had just come back from his risky trip to the source of the Yangtze River. He went with a jeep team organised by the government, but they did not reach the holy glacier. He told me about the risks. "As soon as we returned to the Qinghai-Tibet Highway on the way back, it felt like we just escaped from the jaws of death."

We had already stayed at the military depot in Danggula Mountains for almost a month before we could make up our mind to set off to Mount Geladandong. I remembered that the weather finally got better on the plateau, and we immediately rented two Dongfeng trucks from the local Tibetan people, taking pains to fortify our courage.

With mixed feelings, we left the Qinghai-Tibet Highway and entered the swamp and hilly area in the west. Our trucks sank into the swamp from time to time, and worse yet, we often lost our way in snowstorms. The weather was terrible with snow pounding down as it turned dark. We were driven to the brink of desperation, but we wouldn't turn back for we were concerned about saving face. The other important reason was that we saw the pyramid-like Mount Geladandong in the distance. One could not help but being fascinated by the enchanting scene before the eyes.



At dusk we were all exhausted after suffering through snowstorms and the rough ride, so we put up the tents and were ready to rest. Just at that moment, the sky cleared up. I rushed to a nearby mountain slope with a camera, while Darji, the guide, and others were cooking. When I was close to the top of the mountain, the golden top of the

pyramid suddenly appeared before my eyes. And when I continued my way up, I saw that the mountain was getting clearer and clearer. Following the movement of the sun and rosy clouds, Mount Geladandong changed colours all the time: scarlet, dark red, bright red, reddish orange, darkish pink, purplish red, and many colours that are not found on the chromatogram. When the sun was setting, the top of the mountain turned white from dark red. I was surprised to see such a perfect harmony in colours. That day when I gazed at the distant snow-capped mountain, I was so excited I almost instinctively dropped to my knees.

The Heartfelt Smile of the Plateau People

The weather was extremely nice the next morning with a blue and cloudless sky. We crossed over the hills and went forward along the Gaerqu River and soon saw the mountains. But it looked totally different from what I had seen the day earlier on the slope. It looked like a white Great Wall lying horizontally in the distance, as quiet and elegant as a maiden.

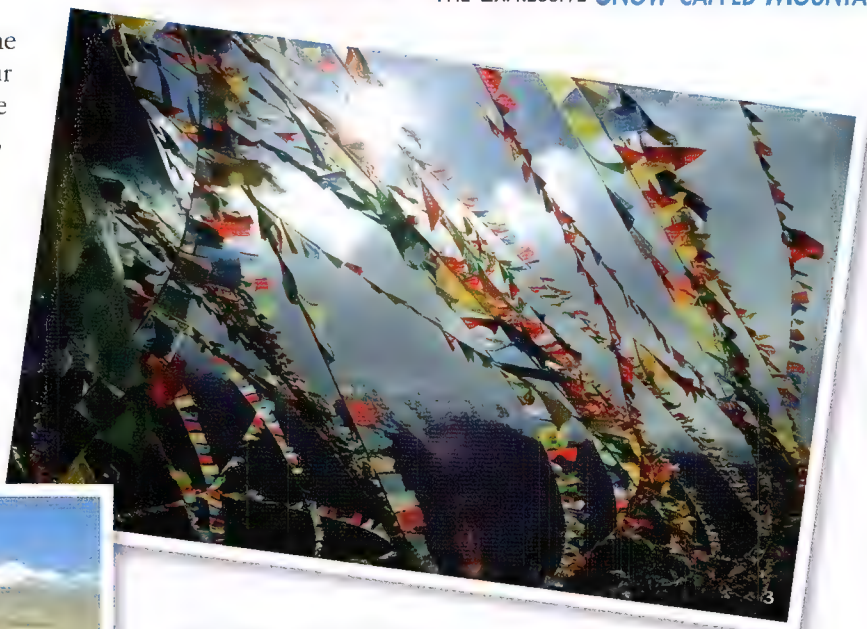
It looked close enough to touch, but we ended up spending two days to reach the glacier at the foot of the mountain. We were really surprised to see that some people were living in such remote area. We saw that a family lived in a permanent adobe house built higher up just below the



glacier tongue. That was the house of Zema, the head of the village, whose wife had died four years earlier. His 16-year-old daughter did all the housework, picking up cow dung, cooking, making clothes and buttered tea and so on. And she even found time to help her younger brother herding sheep and cattle.

The neighbour of the village head was 44-year-old Ma, whose wife was named Baidi. They had a 16-year-old son and a six-year-old daughter, and the family lived in a black tent made of yak felt.

Another family of five members lived not far away. The husband, Buto, was 45



years old and the wife, Jiqi, 38 years old and they had three daughters. The eldest one was 16 years old, the second one nine and the third only four months. They had one more child but it had died. We went to the tomb of the child and saw a big piece of its beloved crystal on the top of it. We were told that the crystal was found during herding.

We stayed there for two days and enjoyed the best hospitality from these families. It is difficult to image the scarcity of material in the glacier area of more than 5,000 m high. But we learnt that the plateau people had the most sincere hearts and candid smiling faces.

After the trip to Geladandong, I fell in love with the snow-capped mountains and the plateau. After visiting more mountains since, I know that the genuine people living at the foot of the mountains were also part of the attraction for me.

I was really moved by an old woman on the way to the Meili Snow Mountains. We took a truck in Mangkang together with some Tibetan people who were going to the Meili Snow Mountains to pay homage. The cold wind was howling and we felt like we were in an icebox. Some people put their hands into their sleeves and we were all shivering with cold. Just then, an old Tibetan woman took the hands of one of my companions and put them up her sleeve, warming the hands with her aged arm. Her affectionate gesture broke the language barrier and I was deeply moved by that woman.

The Pulse of the Earth

The herdsmen living at the foot of the mountains believed that the pulse of the earth was at Geladandong. In their hearts, the snowy mountains are the same as people and sheep and cattle, which they not only live, but they have names and genders. They told us that Mount Geladandong was a female mountain, matching my first impression. They also told us that the mountains had personal grudges against each other and they quarreled just like people.

In the hearts of the people living on the plateau, the snow-capped mountains are inviolable. The 6,656-m Mount Gangrenboqi (literally meaning source of the rivers and root of the mountains), the main peak of the Gandise Mountains, is the Holy Land of four religions. It is the original holy mountain of the Ben religion of Tibet and it is also a place for believers of Tibetan Buddhism to make pilgrimage. Moreover, it is the holy mountain of Indian Jainism. It is said that Rishaba, founder of Jainism, thoroughly grasped the core meaning of life and belief at Mount Gangrenboqi. Last but not least, the believers of Hinduism call this mountain "Kailash", meaning holy land, because they thought that Siva, one of the most powerful gods of Hinduism, live here.

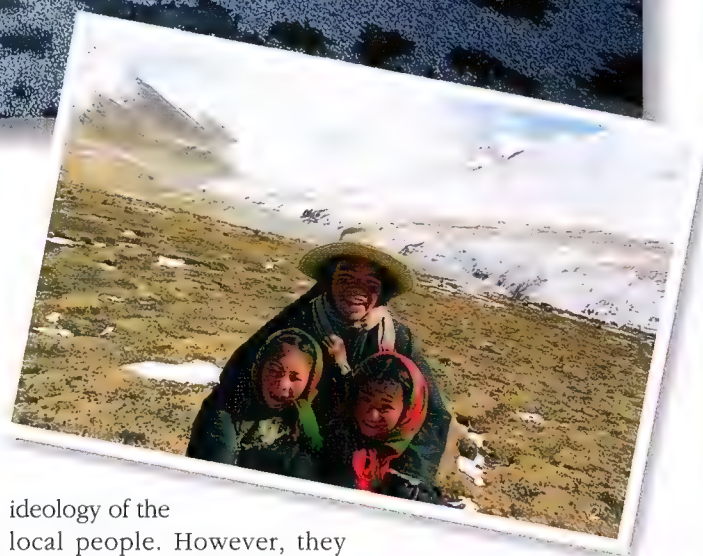
When I stayed longer in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, I couldn't help pondering about how people worship the snowy mountains here. Do they hold a backward and ignorant belief in our scientifically and technologically developed times? People often used the word "conquer" when mentioning mountains. But can mountains offer more meaning to us than just simply being conquered?

1. The holy and pure mountain attracts climbers.
2. The Meili Snow Mountains in Deqin of Yunnan belong to one of the eight Buddhist mountain ranges of the Tibetan people.
3. The sutra streamers waving with the wind represent the murmuring prayers of the believers at the Meili Snow Mountains.
4. The Tibetan people on the plateau live a hard yet spiritually fulfilling life.



While enjoying the convenience of modern lifestyle, people living in urban areas often complain about the pollution. Paradoxically, people living at the foot of the mountains, being so close to the sky, have a reverent heart and deep respect for their environment.

We have come to realise that people can actually change the shapes of the mountains. The erosion of the glaciers in the arms of the mountains is inevitable. The degeneration of the source of the Yarlung Zangbo River, the longest river of the Tibet Autonomous Region, is even worse than that of the source of the Yangtze River. From the change in the colour of the water of the Yarlung Zangbo River, we can clearly see the worn down glaciers. The media repeatedly reminds us that the climate is getting worse, and the precipitation has constantly decreased as the sandstorms have become stronger year after year. These seem to be caused by the over-herding and backward environmental

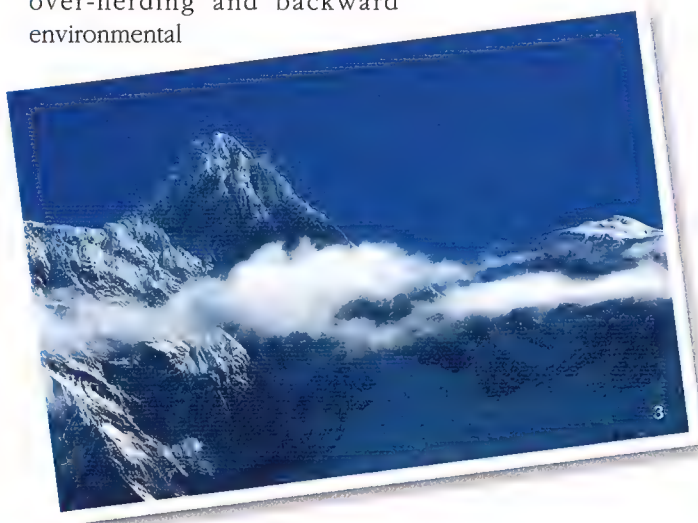


ideology of the local people. However, they are not true. Take Tibet Autonomous Region for example, the area only has two to three million people, and its destructive power is limited. More and more evidence has shown that the worsening of the environment in Qinghai-Tibet Plateau are mainly due to the change of the global climate and the pollution from the Western countries. The car exhaust released by the United States accounts for one-fourth of the total of the whole world. On top of that, there are various waste products from wars. Regrettably, we are a part of the global village and have to suffer from the consequence of contamination with everyone.

The Unrivalled Wonder of Mount Jialabailei

Mount Nanjiabawa and Mount Jialabailei together create the largest gorge in the world, Yarlung Zangbo Gorge. We spent more than a month visiting the two snow-capped mountains. Setting off from Paixiang Township and walked along the Yarlung Zangbo River to Jiala Village, we had a nice look at these peaks on the way.

We later entered Medog, crossing over Duoxiongla



Mountain and went to the other side of the mountains along the river. We saw the unforgettable scene on the way back after seeing the Badong Waterfall in the Yarlung Zangbo Gorge. The snow-capped mountain that was enveloped by dark clouds all the time suddenly appeared. But I only had time to take two pictures before the scene disappeared.

Another dusk I climbed a tree to take a break since we had been in the deep forest for the whole day. Just at that moment, the ice-pure and jade-like Mount Jialabailei suddenly appeared before my eyes. It seemed that I could touch it by holding out my hands. At that moment I made up my mind to begin mountain climbing, just like all the other "crazy" people.

I'm afraid that people would be hard pressed to understand the feeling unless you have experienced it yourself. It was getting darker and darker. I was surprised to see that the scenery and things around our camping ground were still faintly visible, and even the lines of our palms could be seen clearly. We knew that it was the moonlight reflected from the big and round moon. No other place could have that kind of bright moonlight without the strong and clear reflection from the snow-covered Mount



Jialabailei.

That night I even wrote my diary under the moonlight at Mount Jialabailei. It was a novel and wonderful experience. And I would be forever enticed to visit more of these captivating snowy mountains.

Translated by Wang Zengfen

1. Such beautiful snow-capped mountains are countless in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.
2. The children are living at the foot of the Geladandong Mountains, where it is known as "no man's land".
3. Nanjiabawa Mountain is the 15th highest mountain in the world.
4. The bright moon rises above the mountains by the Yarlung Zangbo River.

Famous Snow Mountains in China

- **Mount Qomolangma**, the main peak of the Himalayas and with an elevation of 8,848 m, is the highest peak in the world. It is on the eastern border of China and Nepal, with its northern slope in Dingri County of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and the southern slope in Nepal. Mount Qomolangma, in the shape of a giant pyramid, has an extremely dangerous topography and complicated environment, but it is considered the ultimate challenge for mountaineers.
- **Mount Nanjiabawa**, the 15th highest mountain in the world and with an elevation of 7,782 m, is on the inner side of the great gorge of the Yarlung Zangbo River. It has a clear natural vertical belt dividing it into a tropical zone and a Frigid Zone, also known as a "natural museum".
- **Mount Jialabailei**, with an elevation of 7,294 m, is opposite Mount Nanjiabawa. There are several dozen glaciers in the valley and its top is quite open and flat. The mountain is covered with snow and ice all year round.
- **Mount Geladandong**, in the southwest of Qinghai Province, and with an elevation of 6,621 m, is the main peak of the Danggula Mountains. This mountain, with a length of 50 km from south to north and a width of 20 km from east to west, has more than 40 modern glaciers and it gave birth to the Yangtze River, the third longest river in the world.
- **Mount Gangrenboqi**, in Burang County of Tibet, at a height of 6,638 m, is the main peak of the Gandise Mountains. This mountain and the Mapangyongcuo

and La'angcuo lakes in its south, and Mount Namunani, are known as the "sacred mountains and lakes" by religious believers. Every year thousands upon thousands of believers from Nepal, India and China come here to pay homage.

- **The Meili Snow Mountains**, the highest mountain range in Yunnan Province, at 6,740 m, is at the main ridge of the Nushan Mountains, on the north reach of the Nujiang River at the juncture of Yunnan and Tibet. It is one of the eight Buddhist mountains of the Tibetan people and attracts many believers from Tibet, Sichuan, Yunnan, Qinghai and other places.
- **The Yulong Mountains** in the Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County are at the southern end of the Yunling Mountain range. The main peak is Shanzidou with an elevation of 5,596 m. The Yulong Mountains have a length of 34 km from south to north and are 13 km from east to west. With 18 peaks over 5,000 m, standing side by side along the east bank of the Jinsha River, it is generally known as the "18 peaks of Yulong".
- **The Gongga Mountains** are 60 km from south to north and 30 km from east to west. Situated at the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, they are the middle section of the Hengduan Mountains. The main peak, at 7,556 m, is surrounded by Kangding, Luding, Shimian and Jiulong counties of Sichuan Province. There are 45 glaciers in the area of the Gongga Mountains, including the Hailuoguo Glacier, the longest, which is a famous glacier park.

The Recuperative Jiangzha Hot Springs

Photos by Zhu Bin Article by Liu Qiankun



Natural Reserve in Tiebu of Sichuan. In Tibetan, "Jiangzha" means "many red willows". Jiangzha Town has a unique topography that situated between high plateaus and mountains. The hot springs are spread in the mountains, 5.5 km north of the township.

Jiangzha hot springs comprise more than 50 spring sources of various sizes. In the Tibetan regions of Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai, the hot springs are known as the source of "holy water". As such, Jiangzha is also dubbed the holy and auspicious region.

Jiangzha hot springs are rich in a radioactive element named Radon, which is believed to have a positive effect on cancer. Abundant in many other minerals and chemical elements, the spring water has turned the mountain rocks peacock blue and jade green, almost like a watercolour painting. Furthermore, the pavilion of mixed Tibetan and Han style there harmonises beautifully with the natural scenery.

Hidden in the midst of the borders of Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai provinces, Jiangzha hot springs have been worshipped as a holy site by the Tibetans there for centuries. They went to great lengths to have a dip in the springs. Today, Jiangzha hot springs are still steaming between the mountains, and they keep on drawing many visitors.

The hot springs are found in the township of Jiangzha, north of Ruogai County in the Tibetan Qiang

Autonomous Prefecture of Aba in Sichuan Province. It neighbours Luqu County of Gansu and the Reindeer





Partitioned Bathhouses

To learn more about the healing power of the hot springs, we visited a native Tibetan physician, Nimei. He explained to us that the five kinds of Jiangzha hot springs were all detailed in the Tibetan medical canons. Then he accompanied us for a guided-tour of the springs. Shortly after leaving his home, we arrived at the largest hot spring in the region, where some Tibetans were soaking. The traditional unisex hot springs have been abandoned. The hot spring is now partitioned into two bathhouses, each holding up to 100 bathers. Nimei told us that it was the most common type of sulphur hot spring, which is good for rheumatism, skin diseases and arthritis.

The Elixir of Hot Springs

The water from Wulingzhi Hot Spring contains gold, silver, copper, iron and aluminium. It is believed that it can cure rheumatoid arthritis and if children take frequent soaking here, they will live a healthy and long life.



Also, the water is believed to have the power to cure sexual impotence and infertility.

On our way down, we came to a crystal clear stream steaming with vapour of hot spring water. Over the streaming water was a bridge linking to a pavilion, where a few Tibetan women were taking off their clothes to get ready for their

bath. Nimei told us the salt-like material on the rock was alum, and it could cure scabies.

Of course, the hot springs cannot cure all diseases, such as hepatitis, cholecystitis, pneumonia, etc. Yet, it does have good healing effects on skin diseases, unknown tumours and even sexual impotence.

The Jiangzha hot springs is very cheap, costing just two yuan, and you can soak for the whole day. All the hot spring water is changed every hour, and it is very clean.

Every March, April and August, Tibetans come here for a dip. In the peak season, there may be up to 2,000 visitors daily. Tens of thousands of people come here every year, and this custom has been practised for centuries.

Translated by Dora Tsang

Travel Tips

Getting there: Chengdu to Ruorgai: At the Chadianzi (Teahouse) long-distance transport depot, there are two buses going to Ruorgai. They depart at 7 a.m. and 7:20 a.m. The ticket costs 88.5 yuan* per person.

Ruorgai to Jiangzha Township: 20 yuan per person. The bus from Diebu Township of Gansu to Ruorgai passes through Jiangzha. No transportation is available from Jiangzha Town to the hot springs, you have to walk for about 30 minutes or hitchhike. Usually there are farming tractors going to Jiangzha Town.

Accommodation: Ruorgai Xiangbala Guesthouse: a standard room costs 288 yuan per person. It is the best guesthouse in Ruorgai, and it offers authentic Tibetan and delicious Sichuan cuisine.

Ruorgai Prairie Travel Agent Guesthouse:

- Old building: A double room costs 15 yuan per person and a four-person shared room 10 yuan per person. A shared big compound costs eight yuan per person.

- New building: A single room costs 25 yuan per person, and a double 20 yuan per person. For a three-four person shared room, it costs 15 yuan per person.

There are also some very simple accommodations in Jiangzha town, which costs five yuan per person.

- US \$1 ~ 8 yuan



1. Tibetan-styled Jiangzha Hot Spring
2. Tibetans on the way to hot spring
3. Jiangzha Hot Spring deep in the mountain
4. Tibetan mother and son



Capturing the Essence of Pines

Photos & Article by Huang Songhui

Chinese pines are an important element of Chinese landscape painting. With careful observation, a deep understanding of nature, patience, and the right weather conditions, a photographer can achieve the same effect with his pine pictures.

Chinese pines are the very image of nobleness, magnificence and perseverance. Their stout, twisting trunks lean out precariously from crevices on high mountain cliffs, as their roots grasp what little soil clinging inside the crevices. Pelted by rain and wind, weighed down by snow and struck by lightning, the pines just hang there without budging an inch. They have the stubborn but inspiring spirit.

One needs not visit the most famous peak for good pictures, for the Chinese pines alone can make any mountain magnificence. I find the morning mist very useful in creating the atmospheric layers of mountains depicted in many Chinese landscape paintings.

The best way to shoot sunrise is to find a good spot, and set up well before the sun appears in order to catch the first rays. To shoot icicles in winter, it is best to use back lighting and expose for the light to show the transparency of the crystal. If you are lucky enough to come across a sea of clouds, place a lively looking pine (or just some snarling branches or needles) in the foreground to showcase the grandeur of the clouds. The combination of the gentle and warm glow of sunset and pines is another good composition. I like to include the sun in the picture to turn the silhouette of the twisting tree into cursive calligraphy. Shooting the scene with frontal lighting, on the other hand, produces the effect of a rich oil painting.



▲ Equipment

Mamiya 711 camera with 43mm lens

Aperture F22

Shutter speed

1/30 sec (hand held and on tripod)

Tips Use super wide-angle lens to shoot down clouds with some vivid-looking pines in the foreground. Shoot from the edge of a cliff.

▲ **Equipment** Hasselblad 205 FCC body with CFE40mm lens

Aperture F22

Shutter speed 1/125 sec (hand held)

Tips You need to include some pine trees or branches in the foreground to cover up some of the dazzling sunset light. Measure light from the sky to create a dancing silhouette with the branches.

▶ **Equipment** Canon EOS-1V body with EF16-35mm/F2-8 lens

Aperture F16

Shutter speed 1/30 sec (hand held)

Tips Shoot the branches from a low angle with layers of hills in the distance to produce an engraving-like effect.



Translated by Megina Kwan



▲ **Equipment** Hasselblad 205FCC body with CFE120mm lens **Aperture** F11

Shutter speed 1/60 sec (hand held after scaling a tree)

Tips Icicles usually would still be hanging from branches before sunrise. Zoom onto your subject and take exposure reading of the brightness of the ice.

Tips on Taking Pine Pictures

Season Spring (April and May) has seas of clouds in the morning and evening. In winter there will be icicles, drifting snow, fog and clouds.

Equipment Tripod, cable release, wide-angle lenses, telephoto or zoom lenses for misty scenes.

Technique Use a lens hood to cut out sunlight, a small aperture and slower shutter speed for the best depth of view. Sometimes multi-exposure can also be applied. Bring reserve batteries if you are using a digital camera to shoot snowy scenes in winter. Protect the film with anti-X ray bags when using air travel.

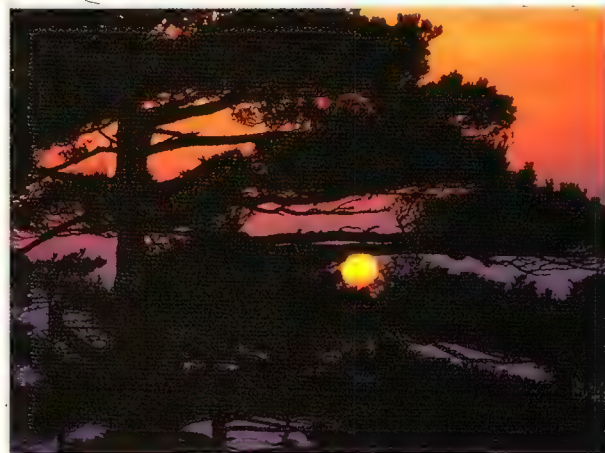
Timing It is best to stay for a few more days to wait for the best time. Check the weather forecast before leaving, as it helps to know if the day is going to be sunny, rainy or foggy. Take different exposure readings. Remember that films are much cheaper than time and transportation expenses.

► **Equipment** Canon EOS-IV body with EF70-200mm/F2.8 lens

Aperture F16

Shutter speed 1/30 sec (using tripod and cable release)

Tips You don't need a telephoto lens for sunrise. Usually a shorter focal length will do. Again, put the pine tree in the foreground to contrast with the rising sun.





Readership Survey

China Tourism always appreciates feedback from its readers. In accordance with your suggestions, we have recently added a variety of new columns. Still, we need to know more of your opinions, including criticisms and suggestions. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us. Thank you!

Please give your evaluation of the stories in this issue and your overall impression of *China Tourism*.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
The Amazing Southern Guizhou	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Russian Artists — "Gold Rush" in China	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Ancient Koguryo Kingdom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Expressive Snow-capped Mountains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Recuperative Jiangzha Hot Springs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Photographs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cover	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It provides us with invaluable feedback which will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine for you.

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BITS AND PIECES ABOUT GUIZHOU

Guizhou Province is possibly one of China's most untravelled areas. 80% of the land here is covered by mountains or limestone, and the province has the highest rainfall among the entire country. Just as a saying goes: "There are no three days without rain, no three coins in a pocket and no three kilometres without a mountain."

Though Guizhou is unfamiliar to many tourists, but it is a fascinating place with spectacular scenery, namely the karst topography and stunning waterfalls.

Guiyang is the capital of Guizhou Province. Covering an area of 176,000 km², it has beautiful scenery, pleasant climate and abundant tourist resources. Guiyang, literally meaning "precious sunlight", lies in a basin at 1,071 m besides the Nanming River. The city was built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and was a small administrative town at Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It became the capital of Guizhou in 1913 and was later the centre of Nationalist Government during the war with Japan.

Whereas Guizhou is a cultural melting pot of ethnic groups, Guiyang is mainly inhabited by the Miao and Dong minorities apart from the Han.

Miao is a festivals-oriented minority. Don't miss the traditional "Si Yue Ba" festival which is held on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month. On this festive day, young Miaos living in Guiyang and nearby will converge at the heart of the city. Dressed in their holiday best, they will dance and sing all night long.



MAJOR ATTRACTIONS IN GUIYANG

Jiaxiu Tower

Jiaxiu Tower is the landmark of Guiyang and is also called the First Scholar's Tower. It is a three-storey tower situated on Fuyu Bridge over Nanming River. Green tiles, red pillars, engraved windows and white stone parapets make the tower superb and striking. Originally built in 1598 in Ming Dynasty, the tower is of great cultural significance. In ancient times, many intellectuals studied very hard for an official rank in feudal China. In order to encourage them, the local majesty ordered a tower be built and conferred on it the name of Jiaxiu, literally meaning "doing the very best in imperial examinations". Incredibly, Guizhou was honoured successively by three number one scholars then.

Jiaxiu Tower houses the authentic works and paintings of many ancient calligraphers. Ascending the tower, you can get a good view of the city. Most impressive is the night scene of the Jiaxiu Tower. Colourfully decorated with lanterns, the reflection of the tower on water is stunning.





Hongfu Temple

Qianling Park and Hongfu Temple

Qianling Park is located in the northwest corner of Guiyang. Named after the Mountain Qianling, it features all the elegance and beauty of the Guizhou plateau. For all travellers this is well worth a visit.

Covering an area of 300 ha, Qianling Park has extended mountain ranges, towering old trees, crystal clear springs and unusual rock formations. More than 1,500 kinds of trees and flowers and a thousand different rare medicinal herbs grow naturally on the mountain. Groups of macaques (monkeys) and various live in the woods.

Climbing up along the Nine-Twisting Path, one can get to Hongfu Temple (Temple of Good Fortune), which was originally built in 1672 by a monk named Chisong. It is one of the famous Buddhist temples in Guizhou Province. The temple has many temple halls such as Daxiongbaodian Hall, Kwan-yin Palace, the Temple Hall for Worshipping Buddha and Sutra-Keeping Pavilion. The fragrance of the joss sticks can be smelled all year round.

Travellers can view thousand images of Buddha on the cliffs. Standing on the top of the Mountain Qianling, one can enjoy a panoramic view of the whole Guiyang city. A popular activity is boating on the Qianling Lake which relaxes travellers' nerves.



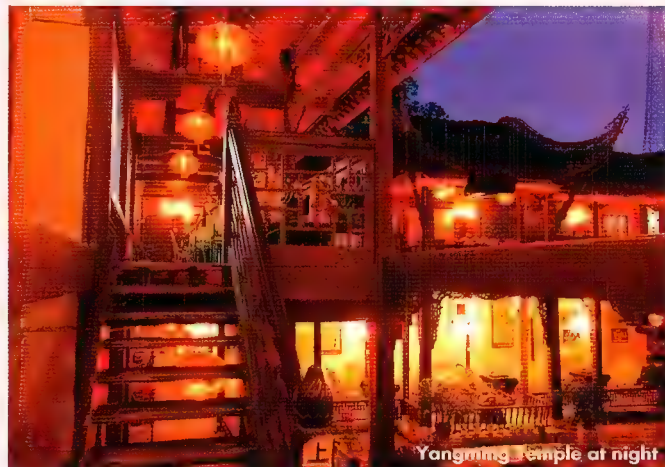
Qianling Park

Yangming Temple and Yangming Cave

Yangming Temple, located on Fufeng Mountain, was built in the Qing Dynasty to commemorate one of the most important scholar and educator of Neo-Confucianism, Wang Yangming (1472-1529).

Wang was a native of East China's Zhejiang Province and a court official. However, he was degraded as a victim of power struggles and became an officer in Guizhou. It was here that he studied further and developed his whole philosophy system that everything is based on the mind. Later on, he lectured in the Langchang Academy of Classical Learning and was considered a sage by Guiyang's people. Nowadays, some of the pavilions inside the Temple are transformed into stylish teahouses where you can enjoy the peaceful atmosphere.

After visiting the temple, you shouldn't miss the Yangming Cave located 1.5 km away. It is a limestone cave where Wang took residence when he first arrived in Guiyang. According to legend, two ancient cypress trees at the entrance of the cave were stemmed from Wang's time.



Yangming Temple at night

Wenchang Pavilion

Wenchang Pavilion, located in the east outskirts of Guiyang, is a three-storey pavilion built in 1596. The pavilion is characterised by the outstanding architectural style of Ming Dynasty. It features exquisitely-carved doors and



Playing Chinese chess in Wenchang Pavilion

window beams with painted drawings and slightly up-rolling eaves. The galleries linked to the pavilion contain a Chinese coin collection with over 10,000 examples from ancient shell money up to 20th-century currency.

Baihua (Hundred Flowers) Lake Scenic Area

The Baihua Lake Scenic Area, situated 22 km in the northwest suburbs of Guiyang, covers an area of 13.5 km². Similar in size to the West Lake in Hangzhou, it is famous for its natural scenery and picturesque karst topography.

More than 100 islands scatters all over the lake. Rocks on the islands form strange and curious shapes and the islands are covered with many wild flowers. Large numbers of mandarin ducks, egrets, and wild geese perch on the islands. There are three minority ethnic villages on the shores of the lake where the villagers make a living from farming and fishing.

Besides its karst caves, the hot springs, Hongwu Temple, Zhuchang ancient fortress and other attractions also worth a visit.

Huaxi Parks

Huaxi Park is situated 17 km south of Guiyang. Covering an area of 220 km², it is a pearl of the Guizhou plateau. Huaxi Park is abundant in undulating hills, crystal clear pools, flower gardens, lakes and pavilions. The most beautiful feature is the clear streams winding through hills. The park has a pleasant climate, neither severely cold in winters nor extremely hot in summers, so it is really an ideal tourist destination all year round. Boats are available in the park for tourists to rent, so they can experience the wonder and excitement of boating on the Huaxi River.



Getting to Guiyang

Guiyang is the nodal centre of transportation that connect Guizhou with all parts of China, in particular Sichuan, Yunnan and Guangxi provinces. Travellers can get to Guiyang easily from most parts of China. Guiyang Longdongbao Airport is 15 minutes from the city centre.

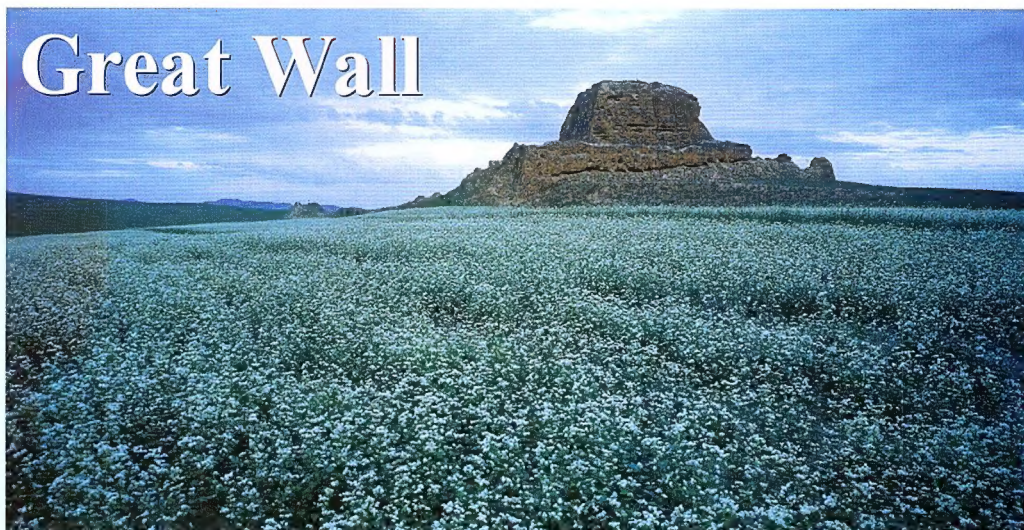
Feature Story:
The Invisible

The Great Wall, one of the most amazing sights of the world, was enlisted in the World Heritage by UNESCO in 1987. Just like a gigantic dragon, the Great Wall winds up and down across deserts, grasslands, mountains and plateaus.

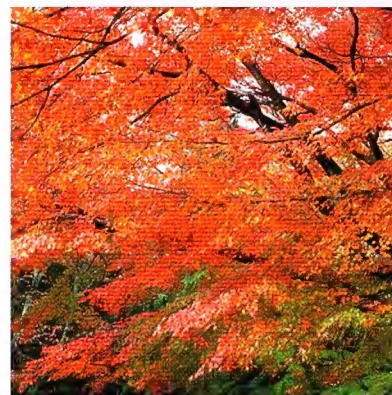
It is one of the largest building-construction projects ever carried out, and it runs (with all its branches) about 7,300 km east to west

from Shanhaiguan Pass near the gulf of Bohai to Jiayuguan Pass in Gansu province, traversing Liaoning, Hebei, Tianjin, Beijing, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Shaanxi, Ningxia, Gansu.

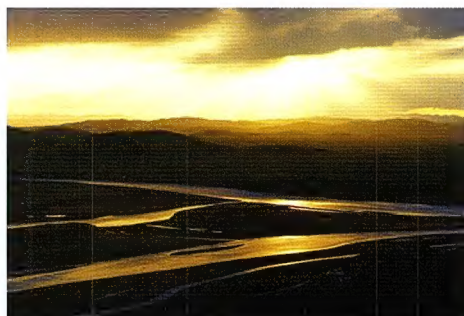
Our next feature story will show you some of the most remote sections of the great wall, which are now in ruins or even entirely disappeared.

**Great Wall****Nature:****Black-faced Spoonbills: Dancers in the Far East**

Black-faced spoonbill, the smallest in the Plataleidae family, is found in the Far East only. The bird drew no attention from people until the 1990s when scientists began to investigate the birds' habitats and breeding sites, and they found that there were merely several hundreds of them still existing in the world. This came as a big shock: black-faced spoonbills has been struggling on the edge of extinction over the past decades because of human disturbances.

**On the Way:**
The First Bend of the Yellow River

The Yellow River, originating from Yueguzongle, north of Bayankela Mountain, flows to southeast from Zhaling Lake and Eling Lake by passing south foot of Animaqing Mountain. Blocked by Minshan Mountain, it makes a 180-degree turn around northwest of Tangke of Ruorgai County of Sichuan Province and then flows to Qinghai, forming a U-shaped circle around Animaqing Mountain, known as the first bend of the Yellow River.

**Photography:**
Maple Leaves in Kyoto

The air of Kyoto is filled with the smell of autumn because of the blazing maple leaves in the city. I went to the Japanese city with full camera gear in order to capture the stunning scenes of maple trees in mid November last year.

Leaves fluttering to the meadow made a red carpet to welcome a flood of photographers who come to this world of fantasy every year.

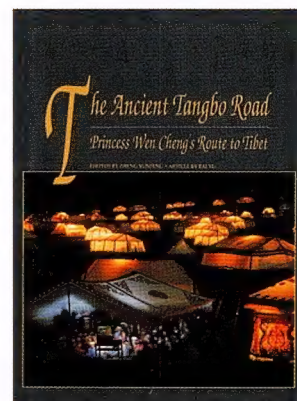
Photographic & Practical Guides for Your China Tours

Before you set off for your perfect journey, you may have to prepare your itinerary carefully. Each of the following recommended readings offers different types of information which cater to our readers' various interests: exploring, photography, or tourist information. They will be great guides to your China tours.

Tracing Marco Polo's Northern Route

A record of an 80-day journey in which our authors drive their jeep 12,000 km long through the northern regions of China following in the footsteps of Marco Polo's historic journey from the Pamir Highland to Beijing. In a medley of images and words, we present you with the fascinating scenery and various ways of life in Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet.

HK\$156



The Ancient Tangbo Road

Covering four provinces including Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, and the Tibet Autonomous Region, the ancient Tangbo Road was created on the map when Princess Wen Cheng was sent as a bride to Luoxie (present-day Lhasa) during the Tang Dynasty. Our photographers and writers, who have followed this arduous route, present you the graceful sights and unique ethnic customs on the way.

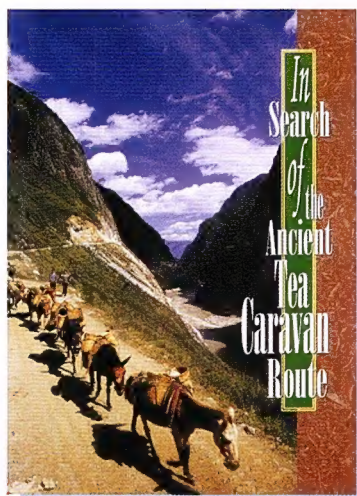
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In Search of the Ancient Tea Caravan Route

The ancient Tea Caravan Route can be traced back to 2,000 years ago, starting from Xishuangbanna at China's southwestern end, passing through boundless forests and valleys to the Sino-Indian, Nepalese and Sikkimese borders on Tibet, the "Roof of the World".

This book is not-to-be-missed by every daring adventurer.

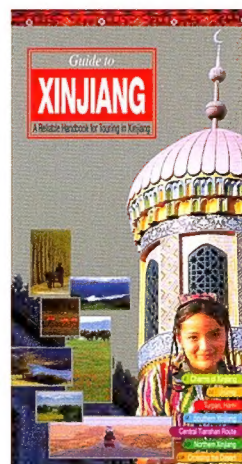
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Guide to Xinjiang

This book is especially designated for DIY travellers who desire to explore the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. There are detailed introduction to scenic spots in five main areas in Xinjiang including Ürümqi, Turpan, Southern and Northern Xinjiang, and Central Tianshan. Practical tourist information on accommodation, ticketing, shopping, local specialty, as well as travel tips are covered.

HK\$96



— From the Pamirs to Beijing —

Tracing
Marco Polo's
Northern Route

SACRED BUDDHIST LANDS



Sacred Buddhist Lands

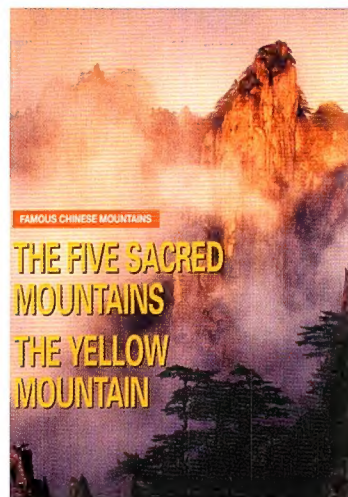
Buddhism in China is inevitably linked with some of the country's best known mountains. And going deep in the mountains and far away from civilization is an ideal place for retreat. Belonging to the four Bodhisattvas respectively, the four most famous Buddhist mountains — Wutai, Jiuhua, Putuo and Emei — are nestled with numerous monasteries and nunneries which have been worshipped by pilgrims for thousands of years. Tourists to these places will totally be soaked in "Kingdoms of Buddhism".

HK\$156

The Five Sacred Mountains The Yellow Mountain

Located in five provinces in China, every of the Five Sacred Mountains — Taishan, Hengshan, Songshan, Hengshan and Huashan — has its magnificent natural and cultural landscapes. Besides, Huangshan (Yellow Mountain), is also famous for its spectacular rocks, pine trees, and sea of clouds. It will be a great enjoyment in reading both the detailed text and remarkable images by our experienced photographers as recorded in this book.

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